

SUMMER, 1952

# RELIGION IN LIFE

Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

*A Christian Quarterly*

OF OPINION AND DISCUSSION

## CONTENTS

### The Church and Its Evangelistic Task

CHARLES B. TEMPLETON, HENRY SLOANE COFFIN, HILLYER H. STRATON

Industrial Evangelism.....	CECIL THOMPSON
Conversion and the Means of Grace.....	BERNHARD CITRON
Our Secularist Age.....	MATTHEW SPINKA
The Creative Conflict.....	EDWIN LEWIS
Somerset Maugham and the Christian Preacher.....	JOHN J. BUNTING, JR.
Does Anybody Love God?.....	WALTER LOWRIE
The Unifying Word.....	DAVID A. MAC LENNAN
The Holy Catholic Church.....	GERALD KENNEDY
In God We Trust?.....	JAMES A. SHACKFORD
Liberal Evangelicalism.....	HERBERT A. KECK
Book Reviews	

BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS  
LIBRARY

## EDITORIAL BOARD

NOLAN B. HARMON, *Editor-in-Chief*

ERMINIE HUNTRESS LANTERO, *Assistant Editor*

JOHN BAILLIE

GERALD CRAGG

JOHN KNOX

ROBBINS W. BARSTOW

CLARENCE T. CRAIG

KENNETH S. LATOURETTE

SAMUEL MCCREA CAVERT

LYNN HAROLD HOUGH

G. ASHTON OLDHAM

PAUL SCHERER

RUSSELL HENRY STAFFORD

---

## ADVISORY COUNCIL

Joseph Haroutunian

Harold C. Phillips

D. Elton Trueblood

Paul Bentley Kern

Richard Campbell Raines

Leslie D. Weatherhead

Earl Bowman Marlatt

Edward T. Ramsdell

Theodore O. Wedel

W. E. McCulloch

Carl C. Rasmussen

Luther A. Weigle

Robert Hastings Nichols

R. Frederick West

---

RELIGION IN LIFE is published quarterly by Abingdon-Cokesbury Press at \$1.25 per copy. Subscription price, \$4.00 per year in the United States and possessions and Mexico; Canada, postage 18 cents per year additional; other foreign postage 30 cents per year additional.

Publication office, 210 Broadway, Nashville 2, Tennessee. Editorial office, 150 Fifth Avenue, New York 11, New York. Entered as Second Class Matter, August 26, 1942, at the post office in Nashville, Tennessee, under Act of March 3, 1879. Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided in Section 1103, Act of Oct. 3, 1917, authorized March 16, 1923.





I

---

VOL

---

The

Ind  
Com  
Our  
The  
Som  
Doe  
The  
The  
In  
Lib  
Boo

---

Cop

# RELIGION IN LIFE

A CHRISTIAN QUARTERLY of opinion and discussion

---

VOL. XXI

Summer, 1952

No. 3

---

## CONTENTS

### **The Church and Its Evangelistic Task . . . . . 323**

CHARLES B. TEMPLETON, HENRY SLOANE COFFIN, HILLYER H. STRATON

Industrial Evangelism . . . . .	CECIL THOMPSON	356
Conversion and the Means of Grace . . . . .	BERNHARD CITRON	367
Our Secularist Age . . . . .	MATTHEW SPINKA	380
The Creative Conflict . . . . .	EDWIN LEWIS	390
Somerset Maugham and the Christian Preacher . . . . .	JOHN J. BUNTING, JR.	401
Does Anybody Love God? . . . . .	WALTER LOWRIE	411
The Unifying Word . . . . .	DAVID A. MAC LENNAN	421
The Holy Catholic Church . . . . .	GERALD KENNEDY	433
In God We Trust? . . . . .	JAMES A. SHACKFORD	441
Liberal Evangelicalism . . . . .	HERBERT A. KECK	453
Book Reviews . . . . .		460

## "The Task of Evangelism"

BRYAN GREEN

JESUS CHRIST saw men either as "at home" with the Father, or not; either as "saved" or "lost." This is the Gospel outlook on the world—it is "either-or." The world is seen from the point of view of God; people are viewed in the light of God's redemptive act. The Gospel attitude sees that God has a purpose that men and women should come into the certainty of His love and forgiveness, and share in the new life in Christ. Christ, also, saw that men's needs could never be met by culture or even by religious acts, but only by the self-disclosure of God to the individual, and the transformation of personality through such a discovery. This attitude brings a definiteness and directness of aim because there is the clear objective to bring about God's purpose.

To a man who thinks like this, the presentation of Christ will be a declaration of the Gospel in a peculiarly evangelistic way. It will not be merely teaching about Jesus, His life and character, but something more. Brunner has said: "God in Christ is God challenging me to decision." In evangelism, Christ is presented as God challenging man to decision, an act of suffering love awaiting man's response in all the tenderness of forgiveness, but in all the judgment of perfect goodness. This is the message that forces a decision, the note of urgency that evokes a "yes" or a "no." No one can remain neutral to this good news of God.

—*The Practice of Evangelism*, p. 11.  
Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951.  
Used by permission.



# The Church and Its Evangelistic Task

CHARLES B. TEMPLETON

## I

NO PART of the work of the church is more seriously suspect than Evangelism. It has been said, "where you have two Christians you have three opinions," and this diversity is nowhere more evident than on the matter of evangelism. Many hold great doubts as to the permanent effectiveness of any attempt to challenge the mind and heart of man and to bring to pass a radical conversion or an immediate and meaningful commitment to Christ. Across the years they have become convinced that

There is no expeditious road  
To pack and label souls for God,  
And win them by the barrel-load.

This doubt of churchmen as to the effectiveness of evangelism is matched by the antipathy of many laymen to the methods of evangelism. Many people have the most unsavory memories of evangelistic meetings. They identify all evangelism with mass evangelism, and the mere thought of any activity even remotely connected with the old-fashioned "sawdust trail" evokes nothing but distaste.

There are, of course, many legitimate reasons for the retreat from evangelism. Too many mass evangelists of the last few decades have been irresponsible, theologically immature, and in some cases utterly unprincipled. This is not to suggest that there have not been men entirely occupied with the task of mass evangelism who have been men of the highest integrity and the most sincere motives. But unfortunately there have been others who have used evangelism for their own ends and have helped gain for it its present unhappy reputation.

In no other part of the church's work and worship have so many excesses been committed. Too often evangelism has been the instrument of division. Too often the dollar sign has been more obvious than the sign of the cross. Too often the appeal to decision has been almost entirely emo-

---

CHARLES B. TEMPLETON, B.D., of Toronto, Canada, widely known first as a sports cartoonist, then as an evangelist and radio preacher, is the first evangelist to be appointed to the staff of the National Council of Churches of Christ in America. He has recently conducted large evangelistic missions in east, south, and west; he is to give eight months a year to the United States and four months to the Canadian churches.

tional in character, and the subsequent reaction dangerous. Too often the converts have been led into an unbalanced Christian life with no slightest understanding of the importance of worship and service. Too often the follow-up has been pitifully inadequate. Too often the evangelist has been a strongly opinionated individualist with no sense of identification with or responsibility to the total church.

It is, however, a great tragedy that in reaction to an unbalanced approach many churchmen have almost entirely lost the note of evangelism from their ministry. It is a simple fact that evangelism is fundamental to the work of the church. What is evangelism but the declaration of the Evangel, and what is the Evangel but the good news that God has entered into history in Jesus Christ? This is the Evangel: "that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." This being true, then any endeavor that has as its end the bringing of men to God is evangelism.

This must be clearly seen, for many have a limited view of the nature of evangelism. Evangelism is being engaged in not only when a hall is hired and a great throng is called to Christian commitment. Evangelism has nothing to do, essentially, with numbers. Jesus was an evangelist addressing five thousand and more on a grassy hillside; but he was as much an evangelist when he sat on a well curb and won an individual Samaritan woman. Evangelism has nothing to do, essentially, with results. It has been estimated that William ("Billy") Sunday gained over a million decisions during his lifetime. On the other hand, William Carey labored for more than ten years in India before he saw a single convert. Was Carey less an evangelist than Sunday? Evangelism has nothing to do, essentially, with methods. One is not engaged in the work of evangelism only when a great meeting place is arranged, choirs massed, an itinerant evangelist engaged, and a large crowd gathered. The work of an evangelist may be done by a drum-beating Salvation Army officer on a street corner, by a robed and hooded high-churchman in his elaborately carved pulpit, by a layman in his visitation, by a teacher in his instruction, by a missionary in his labors, by a chaplain in his duties, by a minister in his counseling. The early church "went everywhere preaching the gospel" and so too must the church of today. If the end result sought is the bringing of men and women to God through Jesus Christ, then, in the deepest sense, it is Christian evangelism.

## II

There are a great many limitations to evangelism which, if unrecognized, can lead to serious repercussions. Evangelism is, in itself, no panacea

for the many ills that afflict the church. Its expression in outreach is but one facet of the total work of the church and must be understood as such. It must be remembered that Christianity is not so much a decision as a life. The evangelism that seeks to win but fails to win to the church is bound to produce infantile Christians seriously limited in their understanding of Christian faith and action. The evangelism that seeks to exist independent of the church has failed to realize that this is a false and impossible isolation. It can be demonstrated statistically that very rarely does an evangelist win anyone directly from what might be termed "American paganism." Almost invariably the convert has previously been touched by some phase of the church's outreach: the pastoral ministry, the church school, radio, or the personal influence of its membership. An evangelism that is not church-related may bring some to spiritual birth, but the "child" will languish and die or be permanently retarded without the nurture and instruction of the church.

But while there are great limitations to evangelism, it has great possibilities for good as well—possibilities that have been neglected too often. The church is recognizing this and there has been a resurgence of interest in evangelism in the past decade that is unique.

This renewed interest has been evidenced in many ways. It may be seen in the constant increase in *visitation evangelism*—in a very real sense a return to the methods employed by the early church. Laymen, after a period of instruction, go two by two from house to house seeking commitments to Christ in the quiet of the home. There is, unfortunately, considerable anticlericalism abroad, and the very fact that a layman is speaking for Christ and the church in nontechnical language often produces a sympathetic hearing and a freedom of discussion that a minister in his official capacity might not be able to evoke. When properly organized and conscientiously carried through, the percentage of decisions gained—as measured against the number of calls made—is amazingly high. Visitation evangelism has shown itself to be especially effective in reclaiming apathetic church members. It is most effective when, in contacting the unchurched, the visitor seeks explicitly to win converts to Christ rather than to follow the line of least resistance and seek only to get members for the church. The permanent effectiveness of the work depends upon the skill of the visitors, the program of assimilation by the local church, and the diligence in follow-up of the visiting teams.

For decades *educational evangelism* has been the great "feeder" for the church. The child, well and wisely instructed, comes to Christian

maturity and in meaningful commitment enters the membership of the church. In many local congregations this kind of evangelism is being done with constantly increasing effectiveness. New curriculums, improved teaching materials, audio-visual aids, more adequately prepared teachers, better classrooms, and the contributions of child psychology to the understanding of the pupil, have all made a contribution to the more effective challenging of young life. Again the danger lies in seeking merely to produce church members rather than committed Christians.

*University Christian Missions* are being conducted with increased effectiveness. The changed tenor of our times is seen in the fact that university students—traditionally difficult to reach—are seriously concerned about the Christian message, and when it is well presented by a missionary equipped for the task the response is remarkable. Last year a total of more than 300 missions were conducted in colleges and universities in the United States and Canada and on many occasions a deep and lasting impression was made on the student life.

The heightened interest of the major denominations may be clearly seen in the increased appointment of *Secretaries and Committees of Evangelism* within the denominations. A dozen years ago only one of what has been termed the "standard brand churches" had a full-time Secretary of Evangelism. Today not a single major denomination is without a Secretary and many have a large staff to assist them. Most of these secretaries share their projects with each other and co-ordinate their plans through what might best be described as "sharing" meetings held biennially by the Joint Department of Evangelism of the National Council of Churches. The programs of evangelism engaged in by the different churches operate under different titles and descriptive slogans but in each denomination are essentially the same.

Today's renewed interest in evangelism is also evident in the *theological seminaries*. Courses in evangelism—too often conspicuous by their absence—are being added to the curriculums of some seminaries, and discussion groups are attempting to rethink the entire matter of the communication of the gospel to contemporary man. The failure of many seminaries to emphasize evangelism has long been a serious hindrance to the church.

The most highly publicized phase of today's revival of interest in evangelism has been the return of *mass evangelism* on a scale long believed impossible. The Rev. Bryan Green, an Englishman and an Anglican, has been, perhaps, the precursor of today's mass evangelists—although Dr. E. Stanley Jones and others have been conducting evangelistic preaching



missions across the nation for many years. Crowds of from two to twenty thousand people nightly have attended Green's meetings, and the balanced, church-centered message that he brings has found wide acceptance. Dr. Billy Graham, a Southern Baptist, has drawn the largest attendance in religious history. With one exception he has topped Billy Sunday's attendance marks in every city where he has gone—the exception being New York City. Green's missions are almost invariably sponsored by the Episcopal Church, and are seldom "interdenominational" in the fullest sense. Graham's meetings are usually sponsored by a strong nucleus of conservative or fundamentalist groups, although in many cities he has also had the co-operation of many of the old-line churches.

The National Council of Churches has recently been conducting city-wide evangelistic meetings under the sponsorship of local Councils of Churches. It is an attempt, still in the experimental stage, to gain the great benefits of mass meetings while avoiding the financial and emotional excesses of much of the mass evangelism of the past. A "team" of many speakers, headed by the evangelist, reaches out into every facet of the life of the community throughout each day of the first week. The evening meetings, which usually continue through two weeks, are straightforward evangelistic services, calling to commitment to Christ and the Church but avoiding the element of coercion. The public services are usually preceded by a week of visitation evangelism. As many as 100,000 have attended these missions in a two-week period, and in cities such as Youngstown, Ohio, and Evansville, Indiana, the attendances on the closing Sunday went beyond the 10,000 mark.

Encouraging as all of these indications of a revival of interest in evangelism may be, we must not reckon them as a permanent gain. At the heart of Protestant strategy to win the world to God stands the local church, and there can be no revival—in the full sense of that word—until the regular ministry in the regular work and worship of the church recaptures the Evangel and sounds it sanely and with power. There is a quality of abnormality about mass evangelism and mass evangelists. Our need is not so much more evangelists but an evangelizing church. As Elton Trueblood points out, at the beginning of the Christian cause, "member equaled evangelist equaled missionary." The task of evangelism can never be done adequately by certain gifted individuals. We must rediscover the Reformation doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers and must all become "ambassadors for Christ." Evangelism is the task of the whole church, and the minister's task is to teach it how to evangelize. God has given the

ministry to the church and the church to the world. The job is not well begun unless it begins at the level of the local church.

### III

The evangelism of the future must learn from the mistakes of the past. A recent comment in a conference on evangelism stated the feeling of many churchmen, "We want evangelism back, but we want it full-orbed and church-centered." Let me attempt to indicate some of the things that must distinguish the evangelism of the future.

1. Tomorrow's evangelism cannot merely duplicate the past. We do not need, as is often stated, "another Moody," "another Finney," "another Billy Sunday." It is not enough to parrot the phrases of another day and to restate the message of an earlier generation. Evangelism must grow up. We must learn from the failures of the past, or today's interest in evangelism will be a passing thing. It is significant that the leanest days for mass evangelism were the years immediately following the heyday of its numerically greatest exponent, Billy Sunday. For regardless of the pros and cons of Sunday's effectiveness, his imitators and successors fell into great error, and for the following twenty-odd years evangelism was neglected or suspect in a great part of the church.

2. Tomorrow's evangelism must go beyond a purely individualistic emphasis. It is not enough—although it is primary and imperative—to save a man's soul. We are not disembodied spirits, we are not converted into a vacuum, and unless men are won *to* something as well as *from* something we have failed. It must be the total gospel converting the total man in the total social situation. Converts to Christ need to understand that Christian experience consists not only in loving God with all of one's heart but also one's neighbor as oneself. Most evangelism in the past has been seriously deficient at this point. We must go beyond a merely individualistic emphasis.

3. Tomorrow's evangelism must be based on an adequate understanding of the doctrine of the church. One is blind to the facts of history who thinks he can evangelize apart from the church. With all its many faults and failings, the church—the organized church—has been the instrument of God through the centuries by which he has conveyed his truth to men. Let all remember that without the church there would be no gospel. For it was the church—an imperfect and unworthy church—that transcribed the oral traditions, translated the early manuscripts, set the Canon of Scripture, preserved the text, printed the Bible in the vernacular, wrote the

commentaries, and is constantly casting new light on the meaning of the text. It may be said in truth that without the church we would not know Christ—there is scant record of him in secular history; but God in his providence purposed to reveal himself in history and supremely in Christ and to preserve the record of that revelation by the church. To believe that a man can work or preach or build a congregation without the church is to be unaware of the facts of history. Tomorrow's evangelism must have a high and adequate doctrine of the church and must win its converts to the fellowship of the redeemed and to its worship and service.

4. Tomorrow's evangelism must provide a deeper motive for decision than emotion. Too often in the past men have been moved to commitment by an appeal to fear or self-interest. A decision impelled solely by fear or made when emotionally overwrought cannot but be dangerous. A purely emotional religious experience creates an assurance belied by later experience. Many a "convert" has merely undergone an emotional catharsis that brought a sense of great release but failed to get down to the real issue of the alienated life.

There is, however, another side to this matter of emotion in our proclamation of the evangel. There are two extremes, and too often today there is an inordinate fear of emotion in the church. Uncontained emotionalism being repugnant, some have withdrawn to the opposite extreme and the emotional content is entirely missing in their ministry. If it be true that an adequate ministry must speak to the whole man—intellect, emotions, will—then any ministry in which the emotional element is missing falls short. It is difficult to understand how the declaration of the Christian message, speaking as it does to all of the deeps of life and coming to grips with all the important issues of this world and the next, can be stated in utterly dispassionate tones. That the individual, the nations, and the world should be called to repentance and the life with God in an entirely unemotional manner is as difficult to envision as the picture of a lover announcing his devotion to his beloved in the same flat tones with which he dictates his laundry list! Decorum can be deadly, and some are so overly concerned about propriety that they will suffer anything but emotion, even boredom.

Winston Churchill, in his appeals to Britain when she stood alone against Germany, called for new resolves and a deep, courageous dedication. But he not only informed the mind and challenged the will, he made you feel! Skillful logic is often wasted, for many do not think logically. Appeals to the will often fail to penetrate, for many are constitutionally indecisive and unable to make up their minds about anything. Emotion,

judiciously used, by a minister aware of the dangers involved, can often be the catalyst that precipitates the decision for Christ.

5. Tomorrow's evangelism must avoid a dominantly negative emphasis. Too often in the past evangelism has propounded a gospel distinguished by its thumping of the "thou shalt not's." Christian living has too often been portrayed as inhibited, negative, restricted, and dull. One became a Christian by making a profession of faith and ceasing to do certain peripheral things. The "great sins" were movie-going, card-playing, dancing, smoking, drinking, and the so-called "unpardonable sin"—which by some kind of exegetical legerdemain became a refusal to accept the evangelist's final invitation. Many young people, in reaction to this negative presentation, cried, "Become a Christian? I should say not. I will not live my life shackled and inhibited by a thousand ancient restraints."

A balanced and adequate evangelism must sound the positive New Testament note. Jesus added up the ten negative commandments of the Decalogue and got a total of two positive commandments: "Thou *shalt* love God, and thou *shalt* love thy neighbor." All the minuses in the world cannot add up to the kind of "plus living" that Jesus demands. His purpose was not to make life smaller but to extend its borders; not to "condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." It is a call to abundant, adventurous, vital, unselfish living, and the dominant note of true New Testament evangelism must make this abundantly clear.

6. Tomorrow's evangelism must proceed from an adequate understanding of what is involved in conversion. There have been two extremes in the past. A so-called "fundamentalist" evangelism has, in practice, often been content to extract a confession of faith—usually on the basis of acquiescence to a statement of Scripture and after the admission that one is "a sinner" and is willing to "accept Jesus Christ as personal Savior." At the opposite extreme, many a candidate is received into a church without any clear understanding of what is involved in the Christian life. The "fundamentalist" too often judges a man a "believer" if he will assent to a certain static set of creedal statements (one must not only believe in Jesus Christ as personal Savior but must also be orthodox in subscription to a specific interpretation of historic Christian faith). On the other hand, his extreme liberal counterpart so waters down Christian faith that it is indistinguishable from respectability. Between the two extremes is found every shade of doctrinal emphasis and an infinite variety of methods. At no point in theology is there so much muddy thinking as at the point of what is involved in conversion. Many an earnest minister is inept as an evangelist



simply because he is a bit confused on the question of what his objective is.

Too often Christian faith has degenerated into a mere Christian philosophy. Too often it is an ethic rather vaguely connected with an ancient supernaturalistic religion and with no obvious relevance to everyday living. Too many times the Christian life is identified with respectability. One is a Christian because one belongs to the church, observes the niceties of behavior, and believes in God. The definite delineation of Christian life seen in the New Testament is conspicuous by its absence. There is no *either/or* in evidence.

The church needs to come again to the conviction that men can be radically converted to Christian faith and that in the divine-human encounter the man far from God can immediately and fundamentally be changed. Every area of Christian history gives abundant testimony to God's power utterly to transform human personality in the twinkling of an eye. Through the years there has been a Saul smitten on the road to Damascus, an Augustine transformed in the garden, a Francis of Assisi turned from profligacy to self-abnegation, a Wesley with his heart strangely warmed at Aldersgate. These with a host of others in every walk of life, at every level of achievement, from every kind of background, have found that in the moment of surrender and commitment they became "new creatures in Christ Jesus." Men can be radically converted.

The church must ever remember, however, that all do not come to God in great overwhelming experience. One must not attempt to regiment the work of the Spirit of God. Many of the Kingdom's most useful and devoted servants grew up in the nurture and admonition of the church and gradually emerged into mature faith. No two individuals come to God alike. The final test of Christian faith is not the ability to hark back to a time and a place of decision or a willingness to give assent to a creed. The final test is the life lived daily with God and spent in service.

7. Tomorrow's evangelism must call to total commitment. Too often today Christ's imperious demands have been soft-pedaled and the church has seemed to be satisfied with a partial and divided allegiance. Too often the pulpit has feared to offend an individual or an entrenched wrong. Too often the ministry has fawned on important or eminent individuals and studiously avoided saying that which would arouse disfavor.

This is tragic, for the call of Christ is a call to the total dedication of one's life. Other causes and other leaders may be content with a partial allegiance, but not Christ. Experience would indicate that people stand ready to make greater sacrifices and deeper dedications than those to which

they are commonly called. Youth, especially, rallies to the demand for yieldedness. The Nazis, and now the Communists, touched deep springs in the life of German youth by their stern demands, and the challenge brought a response. If much is asked it is often given. If the call is to casual and convenient service it usually elicits little but indifference.

This stringent note is needed at the heart of the church. The church stands in judgment of the world and must call it to God. Too often today the Christian message drips with sentimentality. Too often the Gospel has degenerated into a mere word of comfort that seems almost entirely occupied in patching up wounds. There is a note of comfort in the Christian message—and it needs to be constantly sounded in this war-torn troubled age—but the note of peace is not the entire message. The Christian call is a call to a great adventure. "Fundamentalism," though lacking balance, calls its adherents to deep commitment, and the response of the people in dedicated living is often a reproach to the critic of fundamentalist theology who might better examine his own undemanding and easy faith.

8. Tomorrow's evangelism must study its generation and speak in understandable terms to its unique needs. Evangelism, to be effective, must proceed from an understanding of two things: the gospel, and the man to whom it is to be communicated. The implications of the Incarnation need to be more fully grasped by the church. Some ministers have no identification with, and consequently no real understanding of the great masses of working people. The effective evangelist must not only know theology, he must know people. Manufacturers and publishers, for purely commercial reasons, pay large sums for surveys which purport to reveal the likes and dislikes, the concerns and antipathies, the drives and fears of the American people. They study the desires of the "consumer" and pander to them in order to merchandise their products more widely. Surely "the children of the world are wiser than the children of light." Not to suggest that the church should ever pander to the desires of men, but surely the church must be as wise in its understanding of the man of today, and, in understanding, speak to him with penetration and genuine helpfulness.

It is true that man is fundamentally unchanged by the passage of the centuries and that over history are written the words, "Everything changes, nothing changes"; yet while human nature, despite external differences, remains essentially the same, the peculiar pressures and tensions of the historical situation demand that the message of the church be constantly reinterpreted. Many of the archaic and antiquated terms of the church's worship and witness are almost devoid of meaning to millions. Technical

theological terms, though well-worn coin to the minister, often have little significance to the listener. One is not arguing, of course, for a blithe casting aside of all that is unintelligible to the non-Christian and for a descent to jargon, but one is suggesting that the earnest minister who would also be an evangelist must accommodate himself somewhat to the situation in which he ministers. Someone has reminded us that "shooting over the heads of the audience is not a demonstration that you have superior ammunition, but rather that you have poor aim." We must know our message and our generation, and communicate the one to the other.

9. Finally, tomorrow's evangelism must realize afresh the potential in good preaching. It is a fallacy that people are not interested in sermons today. A good sermon, effectively delivered, holds a fascination that can scarcely be equaled. It is almost impossible to overestimate the power for good of great preaching. It is a tragedy that today's minister is so compassed about by a multitude of responsibilities—and important responsibilities—that he does not have enough time to put into his preparation for preaching. It has been stated that Dr. Fosdick spent thirty hours of preparation on his regular thirty-minute Sunday morning sermon; an hour of preparation for every minute of delivery. Little wonder his sermons were homiletical gems, and space was at a premium whenever he spoke.

Protestantism must rediscover the effectiveness of the communication of the gospel through public preaching. It must be preaching that is authoritative but not dogmatic—a word from the Lord. It must inform but it must also inspire. It must be biblical and historical, speaking the ancient wisdom of the church, but it must also be relevant and practical in application. It must be interesting but never a mere collection of quotes and quips and epigrams that sounds as though it was written with Bartlett's *Quotations* open at one elbow and *Time Magazine* at the other. It is not necessarily great preaching because it is profound in content or persuasive in delivery; it must communicate the eternal word of God to the very heart of contemporary man with power and helpfulness and illumination.

To this hungry, confused and wandering generation—enamored of its material prosperity and its scientific gadgetry, and yet uneasily aware that somehow it has lost its way—the church comes with the "good news" of God. Let it be a church renewed in commitment to Christ and to his gospel! Let it be a church afire with the evangel and moving out to do its leavening and redemptive task! Let the grace of our God be heralded with no uncertain sound, and let us look with confidence to God to revive his church in the midst of these years!

*From Henry Sloane Coffin*

**A** DISHEARTENING FACT in current life in our churches is that so many leaders, both ministers and laymen, are content to keep going at a regular pace the program of services and other activities. The average congregation, whether in city or village, serves its constituency, but has no continuing plan to increase it. Those of us who have seen the church at work in non-Christian environments—in the Far East for example—know the utterly different climate in companies of Christians on the alert to share their convictions with unbelieving kinsmen and neighbors and, wherever possible, to make their Christian standards those of their communities. Such congregations give the impression of being on the march; and the gospel, as they think of it and try to live by it, is a transforming power with immediate and patent results on those who accept it. The congregation becomes a magnet, and folk within its field are palpably affected.

In contrast hundreds of our congregations exercise no disturbing effect upon their neighborhood. No doubt they bear their constant witness to God and his life with Christ in men, and they uplift Christian standards of righteousness and mercy. The countryside would be spiritually the poorer without them; but they are not aggressive forces enlarging the sway of Christ over men and women and bringing the life of their communities increasingly under his lordship.

Like all institutions the church becomes conventional. Her ministers find their energies absorbed in the routine of their weekly labors—the preparation of sermons and addresses, the visiting of their people, the round of administrative duties in arranging the program of Christian education, teaching new communicants, attending meetings, raising finances and benevolences, etc. One would not disparage the usefulness of the usual; it must go on; but one would take all this routine and focus it on reaching the outsider as well as on ministering to the faithful.

A pastoral visit almost invariably offers contact with someone among relatives and friends not yet an active Christian. Its conversation suggests the lapsed, the indifferent, the uncommitted. Training new communicants should include making these disciples apostles. The program of education

---

HENRY SLOANE COFFIN, D.D., Litt.D., LL.D., is President Emeritus of Union Theological Seminary, New York City. He writes on the relation of Evangelism to the normal life of the church.



must be infused with the outreaching zeal of the New Testament. Sermons and addresses should be aimed at those as yet unattached to Christ and his church, as well as to the many lacks in those nominally devout and devoted. And more basic still, both for the benefit of those already Christian in name and for those who do not own it, the entire program of worship and activities has to be repeatedly reconsidered and redirected to reach with the cogent appeal of Christ those unconstrained or only fractionally constrained by him. Evangelism must be made dominant in the thought and life of every congregation.

## I

Most American Christians connect the word "evangelism" with special series of meetings and the messages of some forceful speaker brought in to warm up the company of tepid Christians in the congregation. Such special meetings and the introduction of a new inspiring personality are of incalculable value. By all means let us provide for these occasional accessory efforts in as many places as possible. They lift ministers and people out of ruts, rouse minds to fresh thinking, kindle hearts and sharpen consciences. They raise the spiritual temperature. But why suffer the week-to-week work of a congregation the year round to become chill? And why depend for heat upon an imported stranger? Where is the leadership of pastor, of office-bearers, of church school teachers, of dedicated men and women in the pews? Evangelistic services may become as much a convention as the regular weekly worship.

Here in every congregation are believing folk on whom the Spirit of God has come. Why may not their divine gifts be employed for the upbuilding and expansion of the church? One thinks of the splendid results of visitation on their neighbors by Christians who care. One recalls so-called cottage meetings—gatherings in homes where the gospel is spoken to a company of neighbors with opportunity for personal talks. Get several such centers in operation in any community and the Spirit begins to warm and quicken lives.

No doubt there is always a certain unexpectedness in his manner of working. Each community has its distinctive needs and methods for their filling. Great assemblies with much publicity have their place, but they are not the only nor perhaps the most effective means of reaching "them that are without." Few places can provide them, and God does not furnish his church with more than a limited number of evangelists who can attract and rouse thousands. But nearly every place can furnish small gatherings—and the more homelike the better—where earnest Christian men and

women can give their witness, and where those who would feel shy in attending a service of public worship may drop in and find Christ speaking to them very directly. Readers of the New Testament discover that Pentecost with its crowds is an infrequent occasion. But in place after place "the brethren" come together and the casual attendant, no doubt brought in by one of them, finds "the secrets of his heart" made manifest; he is touched, perhaps profoundly stirred, and the Spirit of God lays hold on him.

The most effective evangelism has always been in conversations where a convinced Christian bore his witness and the listener needed no other to say to him, "Thou art the man." Any congregation which possesses men and women willing to take time to call, or to open up opportunities at their work for speech with their acquaintance, can be a growing company to whom God is adding such as are being saved. Preachers who can move masses are scarce. Thank God for every such ambassador sent us. But disciples who can quietly by life and word testify to what Christ means to them are in every congregation, if only they can be awakened to their responsibility. The pastor must set the example; otherwise Christians whom God moves may have to act apart from him. Advances in many places occur in spite of the shyness or lethargy of the ecclesiastical leadership. Study the work of the Spirit in any community, and one finds him active often in unexpected men and women, employing strange means to win the attention of the unlistening among his children.

This is not to condemn the regular ministry, who, for the most part, are devoted, conscientious and capable servants of the church. They may lack in magnetism, and God brings on the scene a man with an unusual background or with a picturesque way of putting the same message which more prosaic preachers are giving. Or he employs the unprofessional witness of lay folk to bring home the message which the conventionally trained ministry somehow render unconvincing and remote to the mass of men and women. The formal sermon is by no means the only preaching of his word. But wherever such occasional words from God are uttered in conversation or in unusual gatherings, it is noteworthy that those affected are in most instances men and women who owe to their homes and to the church schools of their youth at least a background which renders intelligible this message which seems to them to come with surprising directness from God to their immediate need. Evangelism in its many forms would be vastly less potent without the steady, and often seemingly humdrum, work of the Christian church. The very thought and language in which the message is cast derives its meaning from lives and teachings which the frequently disparaged conventional church inspired and nourished.

Unquestionably the most urgent need is for evangelistic calling both by pastors, office-bearers, and the rank and file of church members. This requires no machinery and no outlay in money for advertising. It demands of the pastor that he take himself in hand and plan out his days and evenings to provide touch with those not yet within the fellowship of any church. It demands of him also some painstaking recruiting of suitable visitors from the congregation and their preparation by prayer and conference for the task. It is wise to arrange to have the visitors meet with him, and perhaps with their fellow visitors, for report. Difficulties encountered may be frankly faced, and a family or individual with whom one visitor has not succeeded may be assigned to another. Visitation of this sort demands tactful approaches, and constant successes are not to be looked for. Blundering visitors may drive away the sensitive and arouse criticism and opposition. There is a skill to be acquired in opening up the subject of personal religion. We are on holy ground. But blundering must be risked, and is preferable to the inertia on this theme so widely prevalent. Christians have an obligation to share the riches of Christ which we dare not repudiate.

## II

The special evangelistic campaign, provided it grows out of the spontaneous desire of the earnest-minded, may produce vast results. It brings home to the members of a congregation their missionary responsibility. It concentrates their thought and prayer and effort on the church's primary task. It gives pointedness to the preacher's sermons and calls. He preaches and visits for decisions. It compels him to ask what elements in the gospel have most immediate appeal to the men and women before him. It will change his emphases and place Christ and his claims on men to the fore. There are times and seasons in the life of all communities when events take minds to deeper levels and turn thoughts to more serious themes. This is the quiet work of the Spirit of God, and the pastor must be alert to these subtle movements of thought and feeling, or he will miss the doors which God is opening. We cannot make his winds to blow, but we can become aware of them and open windows. Watching for the moving of God's Spirit in the souls of men is an all-important task of every religious leader. There cannot be pumped-up, man-made renewals of spiritual vitality; but there are dampened and thwarted renewals where God's servants slumber and are obtuse to his life-bringing presence.

Few better things can happen to any preacher than to be faced with the task of stating his basic Christian convictions with a definite purpose of gaining for them the whole-souled assent of those to whom he is speak-

ing. One reads the fascinating biography of the late Peter Marshall and appreciates how the evangelistic weeks, which he gave in various places, improved his preaching. He acquired a deftness in getting into the secret places of souls and carrying the constraint of Christ home to men and women. All his subsequent sermons had this *Mr. Jones, Meet the Master* element in them. It was not talk *about* Christ, but face to face encounter with him. And this is the heart of the Christian evangel. If more ministers could be enlisted for such special efforts in congregations, there would be revolutionary transformations in their preaching, both in its content and in its expression and delivery.

But how tragic that many in our pulpits would never be invited to take part in any such evangelistic endeavor! They lack the magnetism, the moving force of their convictions, the human touch which renders them sensitive to the moods and cravings of contemporaries, the skill and imagination to portray Christ in his all-sufficient answers to the needs and longings of men. Perhaps these abilities cannot become the possession of all ministers. They are gifts of God and not within man's control. They cannot be taught. But if "the best gifts" are to be earnestly "coveted," many more in the ministry could achieve them in some measure, were they sufficiently eager for them and willing to pay the price.

In the evangelistic message of the recent past, several outstanding defects have been pointed out, and need to be guarded against today.

1. Its association with a negative ethic. It is easier and more dramatic to denounce sins than to set forth fullness of life in Christ. Evangelists have thundered against drink, sexual license, political graft, swearing and obscene speech, etc. But a man may be guiltless of any of these and still be very far from the life with Christ in God. Ecclesiastical sins such as disregard of the Sabbath, neglect of public and private worship, and the like, have been stressed. The impression is given that the follower of Christ is to be known by what he does *not* do. Many evangelists have combined these denunciations with attacks on various popular amusements—dancing, sports, the theater, movies—with a consequent moral confusion.

What is needed is a clearer and more persuasive presentation of the way of Christ in current life. There is doubtless need of moral surgery. Some things must be "plucked out" and "cast away"; but in most instances where men are committed to Christ and occupied in his affairs, "weights" are laid aside and many sins sloughed off. Men move into a new spiritual climate where much that is evil cannot survive. To be sure there is a Christian standard of judgment which discriminates sharply between that

which is "lawful" and that which neither is expedient or edifies; but such a standard cannot be set forth in sweeping generalizations. It belongs in the "teaching" office rather than in the evangelistic proclamation of the church.

2. The vagueness of its goal. Men have been pled with to "accept Christ" without any clear explanation of what that involves. Doubtless this, too, belongs to the teaching office; but it is hardly fair and certainly futile to induce men to commit themselves to a loyalty as nebulous as that held up in much evangelistic preaching. There is a sense in which all commitment to Christ has to be a "leap in the dark." We cannot foresee to what situations we shall be led, and what will be the obligations they lay upon us. Like Abraham every disciple goes out with God not knowing whither he is being taken. But something clear should be said concerning the authority of Jesus and what it means to accept his lordship.

*To what* are men saved, converted, born again? What in present circumstances is the "newness" of the "man in Christ"? This can be most successfully set forth by concrete illustrations. One recalls a striking phrase in the Epistle to Diognetus, according to Bishop Lightfoot's translation: "this new interest which has entered into men's lives." Here was a purpose and a zest which the tired and unhoping Roman world needed, exactly as our depressed and discouraged time needs them.

3. Its message is far too often tied up with an obsolete theology. One of the qualities which made Henry Drummond so effective not only with medical students in Scotland but also with groups of cultivated folk in London was the freshness of his thought. He held firmly the evangelical convictions, but he put them in unhackneyed language. Read some of his addresses, and one sees at once part of the fascination of his presentation of the Christian gospel. All satisfying evangelism needs theology—convictions of God, of Christ, of the Spirit, of man and of his life with God. Almost all the great evangelists have been theological preachers, and looking back across the generations we associate their names with the emphasis on certain doctrines. But the doctrines need to be subordinated to the personal encounter of Christ with the souls of men. They are incidental; he is primary. It is tragic to see an earnest man wasting his energy attempting to induce listeners to think precisely as he does, instead of getting them to enter the friendship of Christ and form their own firsthand views of One now personally known.

4. A fourth defect has been its undue preoccupation with individuals. Evangelists have visualized souls as isolated units, rather than as human



beings in their many social relations. Their converts have not infrequently been poor citizens, unpleasant relatives, and sharp dealers in business affairs. One recalls a significant comment of George Eliot's on Mr. Bulstrode, "whose celestial intimacies had not improved his domestic manners." It is as essential to preach fidelity as to preach faith. Many persons find the discharge of their social obligations the road along which they encounter God, who is himself most deeply committed to all his children. Family responsibilities have often proved to be the ties which brought parents to God. It was when little children were entrusted to them that they craved for them the life with the heavenly Father and were led themselves into partnership with him.

In our day when civic ties are vividly brought home, when young men are claimed by their country and parents yield them to an obligation prior to their own, when responsibilities for a whole world lay hold on consciences, God is recognized as behind these claims, and indispensable in his wisdom and power for their proper discharge. In the most secular magazines one is confronted by author after author who stresses the necessity for spiritual solutions of current social and international problems. Widely it is appreciated that ultimately all difficulties run back into the consciences and souls of men. There must be radical alterations in the outlooks and aims of nations. "A new heart and a right spirit" become indispensable, if races and peoples are to dwell together in friendship.

And when the question is once raised, whence come new hearts and right spirits, men are taken beyond the confines of the human. These come only "from above." Men are left looking up to the Most High. Psychiatrists may analyze the feelings of groups and of their individual components; but when it comes to the cure of wrong and malignant emotional drives, when the problem is of the creation of a clean heart, then the wellspring of new inner life has to be sought from without the motives and purposes which are already dominating men. Like the water which supplies fertility to the parched and arid valleys of the Pacific coastal plain, this spiritual inspiration derives from the mountains of God. On their snow-crowned summits are stored up resources which fructify gardens, orchards, and grain-bearing mesas.

### III

In the past few years California has suffered from severe droughts. This last winter rains and snows have been unusually abundant. Our newspapers have featured the snows piled on the high Sierras and spoken of their peril to traffic and their obstruction to commerce. We have had

a correspondingly long spiritual drought due to the secularism of recent decades. Now storms, heavy storms, have swept over our world. They have been devastating to human life and to goods. We have bewailed our severe losses. But this may well be God's bountiful provision for our time and the years ahead. On the heights are reserves of moisture which can be employed for the inspiration of man's business and politics and family life.

We are not thinking now only, or even mainly, of individual souls. We are thinking of communities, of nations, of an entire world. A change in the water level can dry up or can render moist the whole countryside. Religious movements in the past have prepared the way for outbursts of artistic creation, of scientific discovery, of educational advance. They release the latent energies in minds and free them for action. Revivals of faith alter the spiritual climate, and in the new atmosphere fruits and flowers, hitherto unthought of, can be grown.

There are signs that mankind is now changing an arctic for a temperate zone. The barren ice age is over, and the warmth of the divine fellowship brings revolutionary changes in the life of our race. It is such changes which Israel's prophets foresaw resulting from God's more immediate communion with his people, and through them with all mankind. Read the magnificent message which stands at the conclusion of the chapters in Isaiah usually assigned to the prophet of the exile—Chapter 55. It begins with an invitation to wistful men, who can be themselves reborn to life with God, and it reaches its astonishing climax in new vegetation—"instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree, and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

The major tragedy of our time is God's unsuspected presence in power. Men are looking up and complaining that he does nothing, that his gifts are withheld from our impoverished generation. The difficulty lies with his church's **unawareness** of his eagerness to do for us vastly more than we ask or think.

Some years ago when oil was first discovered in the then Indian Territory, now Oklahoma, one of our eastern dailies sent a reporter down to get the story. In the course of his report he spoke of a visit to the farm on which the most productive well had just been opened. It had belonged to a family which had moved out a generation before from North Carolina and by great effort had won a livelihood on none too fertile soil. The sons and daughters as they grew up had to leave home and seek their livings

elsewhere. Then one day a party of men had come along, made some investigations, and asked the farmer's wife for a drink. She had drawn up the bucket from the well, and was astonished to see them put some of the water in a bottle and take it off with them. A week or so later they had returned and offered the farmer a price for his land far in excess of what he had thought it worth. He sold it; and the reporter told of a well sunk just between the house and the barn, and of the startling gallons of oil pumped up daily. At the time of his visit, he found the elderly couple leaning on a fence watching the operation at the pump, and overheard the woman say to her husband: "To think that all that was at our doorstep, and we never guessed it!"

In God we live and move and have our being. He in all his unsearchable richness is not far from any one of us, and yet—men and women live and die as orphans, and congregations appear weak and ineffective, and the church exists almost lifeless and inert. This is the day of God's presence in limitless power!

From Hillyer H. Straton

WITHOUT a question the most outstanding Christian fact of this century is the rise of the Ecumenical Movement. With its powerful cohesive force it is irresistibly, even though some of us think slowly, drawing Christians together. It is common knowledge that the impetus given the ecumenical movement goes back to the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910. The impact of Lausanne, Jerusalem, and Madras plus that of Edinburgh has made us all fully aware of our debt to the modern mission movement for the advance in understanding of our oneness in Christ. It is perfectly obvious that missions have drawn Christians together. It is not so obvious that *evangelism* has likewise been a powerful cohesive force. This latter factor may have greater importance than we realize. There is real significance in the fact that at this mid-century we are witnessing a widespread revival of interest in evangelism in all communions.

# I

A strong case can be made that the modern mission impact for Christian oneness is itself an outgrowth of evangelistic zeal. The Student Volunteer Movement, which sent hundreds of young men and women to the mission fields at the beginning of this century, owed much to the evangelizing passion of Dwight L. Moody and the Northfield Conferences. Adding to the impact of Moody in the general area was the evangelistic witness of Henry Drummond in college and university circles. When these virile young Christians arrived on the mission fields they soon saw that the world would never be won to Christ in their generation unless they worked together. Dr. Kenneth Latourette writes, "More than any of their predecessors, the revival movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have contributed notably to Christian unity."<sup>1</sup> In speaking further about this, Dr. Henry Pitney Van Dusen says, "These latter renewals of Christian vitality have not been divisive; they have been unifying. The same springs which poured new life through arid organisms parented the great impulses toward fellowship and unity. . . . The fact that recent revivals have furthered unity suggest that it has been true revival."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Christendom*, Winter 1945, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 42, 43.

---

HILLYER H. STRATON, Th.D., D.D., is Minister of the First Baptist Church, Malden, Massachusetts. He writes on Evangelism in its relation to ecumenicity. The article was first presented as an address to the C. C. ministers' club of Boston.

The close of the nineteenth century witnessed the rapid decline of denominational rivalry. The great revivals of Moody and, a little later, Billy Sunday, were drawing Christians irresistibly together. Moody belonged to all Christians. Most of them never knew that he was a Congregationalist. This was likewise true of Billy Sunday; his Presbyterian affiliation was never emphasized. Militant evangelism in the early twentieth century developed some factors which we might criticize, but it did exert a powerful cohesive influence for all Christians, even stepping across the wide gulf between Catholics and Protestants. As a boy, I remember my father taking me to the Billy Sunday meetings in Baltimore. The chief of police in that city stated that he rotated his entire police force, consisting mostly of Irish Catholics, so that every man would have a period of duty in and about the tabernacle. He testified that the force itself was transformed by the ethical impact of that meeting. I recall a cop stationed in one corner of the tabernacle doing earnest personal work! Just in passing let me remark that as a direct result of that union meeting there were three hundred additions to my father's church, the Seventh Baptist of Baltimore. Every church in that city experienced a comparable ingathering. Unquestionably some of the seed fell on stony and thorny ground, but there was much that brought forth good fruit, some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundredfold.

It was the theological and ecclesiological emphasis of the late nineteenth century that kept Christians apart. It was the evangelistic and missionary emphasis that began to draw them together. Those of us who have been active in the ecumenical movement know that it is still theological and ecclesiological concerns that keep us apart. We could bring about church union among Protestants in ten years if we could get over these hindrances.

A reaction against evangelism set in after the close of World War I. This was due in part to certain excesses in mass evangelistic campaigns. Added to this was the growing interest in the social gospel and the feeling that religious education would provide a natural and healthy substitute for revivalism. It was a supreme tragedy that the splendid New Testament words "evangelism" and "evangelist" fell on evil days. This was so much the case that many intelligent and concerned Christians reacted unfavorably to the term. Less than a decade ago a negative reaction was received from a deeply spiritual president of one of our finest seminaries when the wisdom of installing a chair of evangelism in his school was suggested. But it is heartening to know that within this period, forty major semi-

naries in America have done just this, established chairs of evangelism. The difficulty which the president mentioned lay not in the ideas back of evangelism, but in the mental blocks which the misuse of the word had occasioned.

All types of evangelism became associated in the minds of some good men with emotional excesses. On occasion there were emotional excesses on the frontier and there have been excesses in some evangelistic meetings since; but we can also point out that our age has not been immune to social and even scientific excesses. Most of us would agree that the atomic bomb is a scientific excess!

Fortunately, a saner view of emotion is beginning to prevail concerning the revival movement in America. The historian, William W. Sweet, formerly of the University of Chicago, could not be accused of being biased toward mass evangelism in religion. In his very temperate and scholarly volume, *Revivalism in America*, which is the best current work on the subject, he says:

Revivalism has been a major influence in American social history. This, I think, no present-day social historian would deny. Its primary influence, however, has been in the realm of personal religion. It has raised moral standards in countless communities throughout the land; it has effected reforms in life and manners; it has enabled religion to reach down to the lowest levels of society and, thereby, time without number, has rendered less sodden the great unleavened masses of men. It has served to enlarge the membership of the churches of all denominations, and greatly increase the impact of religion on American life.<sup>3</sup>

Though we recognize that there have been and are occasional excesses connected with religious emotion, this is likewise true of other human areas. Moderns begin to realize that the great creative drives of life are in the realm of emotion: love, art, literature, music, drama. Jonathan Edwards, one of the most superb intellects this country has ever produced, had a very pertinent thing to say about emotion in religion in his major theological treatise, *Religious Affections*: "The heart of true religion is holy affection. Our people do not so much need to have their heads stored, as to have their hearts touched."<sup>4</sup> Incidentally, his book, *Revival of Religion in New England*, written over two hundred years ago, is strangely modern both in its situation and in its tone. The same objections to revivals and revivalists raised by status-quo churchmen today were raised in the time of Edwards and answered by him conclusively and for all time.

<sup>3</sup> Sweet, W. W., *Revivalism in America: Its Origin, Growth, and Decline*. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944, p. 140.

<sup>4</sup> p. 30.



Often today, however, one has to disclaim the emotional intent to achieve rapport with a congregation. For instance, the missionary Bryan Green says he does not want any emotion. Yet his every effort is to build a high type of emotion by vigorous congregational singing, by five minutes of absolute quiet at the close of his sermon, and by a special question-and-answer period. Along with this he has a technique of walking up and down the aisles collecting questions as the people gather. This makes for invaluable personal contacts, and contributes to a legitimate and dignified type of emotional build-up.

## II

There is a reason why evangelism is closely connected with the extension of the Christian church, for there is a close analogy with the reproductive areas of life. There is a drive back of missions and evangelism as strong as the one we find in the biological field. A generation ago some Christian circles had forgotten that life can be vigorous without the ability to reproduce itself. The army long since discovered that the mule is the best draft and pack animal, far surpassing the horse. After all the Ethiopian eunuch had risen to great prominence in his own kingdom (Acts 8:27), even though he never could have a son. There is a spiritual life that is nonreproductive. Some people who have the new birth themselves serve Christ effectively, do many good deeds, and live beautiful lives, yet never reproduce themselves spiritually. But death for Christians lies within one generation when such attitudes are widespread. Nels Ferré remarked wisely, "A certain type of liberalism has had a low spiritual birth rate." One of the glories in the story of the Ethiopian Eunuch is that he effectively transmitted his faith to people in his own land. This is so much so that the Ethiopian church is one of the oldest in the world with a continuous history.

Jesus gave two tasks to the Christian and he spoke both words to Peter. "Come ye after me and I will make you fishers of men," and "Feed my sheep." A very necessary emphasis upon building Christian understanding in social, economic, and racial relations has meant that the sheep were being fed. We all rejoice that the church has been efficient in these areas. Many of our churches would qualify for a spiritual Duncan Hines! We agree that feeding is essential, but one wonders if the time has not come to stop stuffing the sheep and get out our fishing nets! When the passion to win men to Christ is vigorous, concern will be felt at home as well as abroad. As Christians read in John's Gospel "That they all may be one . . . that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (17:21),

they unerringly tie together their missionary and evangelistic zeal with the move toward Christian unity. This passage certainly connects the acceptance of Christ's way by the world with Christian oneness.

As in many other areas, the United States is the world center for Christian advance. More people go to church and more money is raised here for Christian enterprises than anywhere on earth. This is as true of Catholicism as of Protestantism. Careful students believe that the reason is the impact of religious liberty plus the fact of Christian awakening. The history of American religious growth followed a pattern of migrating economies. The second generation of Pilgrims did not have the religious vitality of their fathers, for migration always causes religious decline. These factors prevailed in the early settling of America and then in the trek to the West. There followed a growth of Pietism a hundred years after the days of the Pilgrims, with emphasis on the personal in religion by Moravians, Baptists, Quakers, and Methodists. This helped to bring about the Great Awakening of 1740-1760. During this time 150 churches were organized in New England, besides numerous Baptist and Methodist congregations. The two outstanding men of this period were Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield, the latter called the greatest revivalist of them all. In New Jersey there was the impact among Presbyterians and Dutch Reformed of the so-called Log College evangelists. Meanwhile in the South revival fires were fanned by Baptist and Methodist preacher-farmer revivalists. Shubael Stearns and Daniel Marshall were leaders in this movement. As a result both bodies started on their amazing growth. It was out of these southern revivals that America made a distinct contribution to the field of Christianity—religious aggressiveness. Kenneth Latourette says:

In general, Methodists were relatively stronger north of the Ohio River and the Baptists were stronger in the South. Yet both won so prominent a place in the West that, when it was no longer a frontier, they remained the largest of the Protestant groups. This was probably because of their zeal in carrying the Christian message to the unchurched and especially to the rank and file, they appealed to what was the nearest approach to a proletariat in the older American stock.<sup>5</sup>

The leading indigenous American religious movement is that which has developed into the Disciples of Christ. Under the leadership of Alexander Campbell, Barton Stone, and Walter Scott, it was intensely evangelistic. Charles G. Finney was the first man to attain national prominence as an evangelist. There followed the era of the professional evangelist, with

<sup>5</sup> Latourette, K. S., *History of the Expansion of Christianity*. Harper & Brothers, 1941, Vol IV, p. 186.

Dwight L. Moody, 1865-1899. From 1900 to about 1925, J. Wilbur Chapman, W. E. Biederwolf, R. A. Torrey, and Billy Sunday were the outstanding figures. Then came a lapse of twenty-odd years in which there was no dramatic evangelist active on a national scale. This brings us to our own period, with the emergence of Billy Graham, Charles Templeton, and Bryan Green, although the last cannot correctly be called a professional evangelist.

The most famous of the early camp meetings was that held at Cane Ridge, Kentucky. It was accompanied by what we would call holy-roller manifestations: weeping, rolling on the ground, and seizures. Shiftlessness and criticism of the brethren did at times accompany these meetings, but the excesses were not nearly as bad as some secular writers have tried to make out. What positive ends did these revivals accomplish? <sup>6</sup>

1. They sowed the seeds of democracy. "The great awakening sought to reach all classes of men; slaves as well as masters; poor as well as rich; ignorant as well as learned. They knew no social distinctions. To them all were on the same plane; all were sinners and in need of a Saviour, whose grace alone availed. Thus the revivals were a great leveling force in American colonial society; they sowed the basic seeds of democracy more widely than any other single influence." <sup>7</sup>

2. They planted colleges: Pennsylvania, Princeton, Columbia, Rutgers, Brown and Dartmouth were related either directly or indirectly to the awakening Christian interest during colonial days. <sup>8</sup>

3. They gave a strong antislavery impetus. Interestingly enough, the abolition movement of William Lloyd Garrison received the largest support in New England from Baptists and Methodists, not from Congregationalists and Unitarians as has been generally assumed. <sup>9</sup>

### III

At the middle of this century we are seeing a revived interest in evangelism. This is one of the most encouraging signs of hope on the Christian horizon. The World Council of Churches at Amsterdam in 1948 placed itself at the center of this movement in its statement. "As we have studied evangelism in its ecumenical setting, we have been burdened by a sense of urgency . . . it seems intolerable that any human being

<sup>6</sup> I am indebted to Dr. Sweet in helping to answer these questions.

<sup>7</sup> Sweet, W. W., *op. cit.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147.

should live out his life without having the chance to hear and receive the gospel." Some of us who were there hoped that the Council would go even farther than it did in establishing a secretary of evangelism, and give him power actually to promote various types of evangelism rather than simply to report and tabulate.

In England the decline of church attendance since World War I has assumed alarming proportions. With characteristic thoroughness, the situation has been faced honestly. A genuine sign of revival is that the Anglicans could sponsor and be challenged by the booklet they produced in 1945 entitled, *Toward the Conversion of England*. Exploratory efforts to find the correct evangelistic technique for this generation are seen also in the Iona experiment and the Christian "Commando" effort. The English Methodists have brought out a pamphlet, *The Message and Mission of Evangelism*, while the people of Scotland treated the same topic under the heading *Into All the World*. Our British brethren admit that there is no general revival yet, but many believe the tide has been turned. In France the evangelistic witness has received strength through the work of Cimade, with its opportunity for witnessing as it rehabilitates in distressed areas. Evangelicals are on the march in Italy. Their sense of belonging to the future is contagious.

It is in Germany, however, that one sees unmistakable evidence of revival. The church is making a strong appeal to the young men of Germany. At the present time there are over five hundred theological students at the one university of Göttingen alone. Professor Hans Iwand teaches theology there. He told this writer that there is a strong Christian movement among lay professional students in fields such as law and medicine. A young woman of my church who studied recently at Heidelberg reports that she was amazed at the high theological tone and the vitality of religious expression at week-night meetings attended by large numbers of the student body. It was not unusual to have as many as 250 present.

German evangelicals have found tent meetings a most effective method of witnessing to the gospel. It was true before the war and is even more so today. In these meetings there is a mixed flavor of old-fashioned brush-armor revival and modern technique adapted for present-day conditions in Germany. Wherever such a meeting is announced, it immediately attracts capacity audiences. The present writer participated in such a service in Essen four years ago. It was in this same much-bombed Ruhr city that the largest gathering of Protestants in this century in Europe was recently held, with a reported attendance of over 150,000.

## IV

Here in America the most effective evangelism in the past twenty years has been done, first by the Federal Council of Churches, and second by the Southern Baptists. At first glance the Southern Baptists' prominence might seem to be an anomaly in the light of our thesis that evangelism leads to ecumenical views. While the Federal Council has been in the forefront of the movement toward Christian unity, Southern Baptists have emphasized their own self-sufficiency. Yet Southern Baptists are continuing the strong tradition of evangelism that occasioned their initial remarkable growth. The homogeneous nature of the population in which they largely carry on their work, plus an abounding vitality, means that they have not felt as yet the need for Christian co-operation. This will change as the increase in travel and in business opportunities further mixes our population.

We must thank the Federal Council of Churches (now the National Council) for the phenomenal work it has done in the field of evangelism in the past two decades. There is no doubt that the evangelistic fires have been kept burning and finally fanned into an intense heat through the co-operative work of the Federal Council. Had it not been for their efforts, the reaction to some of the unfortunate excesses of mass evangelism between 1910 and 1930 would have meant that the two decades between 1930 and 1950 would have been barren indeed. It would have been practically impossible to carry on evangelism on a large scale. With the exception of Charles and Laurie Taylor, who for the past thirty-five years have consistently done very constructive work, major city-wide campaigns during this time were sponsored by the Federal Council's Department of Evangelism. There is the utmost significance in the fact that it has been the major ecumenical Christian organization that has done the most to promote nation-wide evangelism. At the present time, and for many years past, the largest share of the budget of the Federal Council of Churches has been devoted to that department. This in itself is quite revealing.

A brief review of the history of the Department of Evangelism is in order.<sup>10</sup> At the initial meeting at Carnegie Hall, New York City, in 1905, which resulted in the organization of the Federal Council, the popular evangelist J. Wilbur Chapman brought a message on "Interdenominational Evangelistic Work," in which he laid emphasis on the possibility of co-operative efforts in this area. Newell Dwight Hillis followed

<sup>10</sup> I am indebted to the pamphlet on this topic written by Charles E. Schaeffer for the Federal Council: *A Brief History of the Department of Evangelism of the Federal Council, 1950.*



him with a message on "Evangelism, the Hope of the Churches." So we see symbolized in these two men, at the very beginning of organized co-operative Christianity in America, the warmth of the popular evangelistic appeal wedded to the cultured intellectual approach. In 1912 the Federal Council organized a Commission on Evangelism. One of its major tasks at the time was to rebuild credit in the evangelistic approach which "had been so caricatured and commercialized that in many quarters it found itself in bad repute." Under the leadership of the splendid practical evangelist, Dr. W. E. Biederwolf, the stated objectives were to "stimulate the propaganda of American Evangelical Christianity," encourage pastoral evangelism, "arouse church members to a proper sense of their personal responsibility," reach "students of our educational institutions," challenge youth "to the work of the Gospel ministry and missions," "elevate the standard and safeguard the work of a sane and thorough type of evangelism."

In this study made by Dr. Schaeffer, it is interesting to observe how often the statement was made of the need for restoring the whole concept of evangelism to good favor among thinking Christians. Dr. Charles Goodell followed Dr. Biederwolf and rendered excellent service. Dr. Jesse Bader began his active work as a member of the Commission in 1924. He suggested the possibility of all Protestant churches recognizing the 1900th anniversary of the day of Pentecost in the year 1930. This immediately captured the imagination of Christians over the land. We can mark it as the date which began the modern emphasis on the program of co-operative Christian evangelism on a national scale. Dr. Bader was elected as head of the Department of Evangelism in 1931. Much of the remarkable success of this department is due to his untiring work and genuine passion for winning men to Christ.

The principal evangelistic effort in the United States during the middle thirties was the inaugurating of a nation-wide preaching mission.

The Mission formally began on September 13th, 1936, with Dr. Bader as the National Director. Forty-one strategic centers were included in the visitation. Four consecutive days were spent in each city. More than 100 missionaries participated, some serving for the entire period of three months, others for two months, still others for a month or a lesser period. All served without pay—only their necessary expenses and entertainment were provided. They were drawn from every communion in the country. E. Stanley Jones came from India; Miss Muriel Lester from England and Adolphe Keller from Europe. Thousands upon thousands of ministers and leading laymen attended. There were meetings and luncheons for women and for professional and business men, including also labor organizations. Thousands of students were reached in High Schools, Colleges, and Universities.



Daily Seminars with smaller groups were held. Those in the service of the government, national, state, county and city, were brought together to determine how to implement the Gospel through governmental processes into the life of the community. In each center huge mass meetings were held in the largest hall that could be secured.<sup>11</sup>

A tremendous religious impact was made upon the whole country. Future church historians may well evaluate it along with the Great Awakening here in America and the Wesleyan revival in England. The missions have continued on a somewhat reduced scale under the general heading, "National Christian Missions." It was in 1940 that Dr. Bader's Department of Evangelism first sponsored World Wide Communion Sunday. This likewise caught the imagination of Christian leaders and has now become a fixed date in the religious calendar.

In addition to the National Christian Mission there were special missions to universities, Christian teachers, army camps, and chaplain conferences. The Department of Evangelism has also sponsored the universal Week of Prayer and hundreds of visitation evangelistic programs, as well as producing many tracts, pamphlets, and books on the general subject of evangelism. The most recent effort has been the United Evangelistic Advance. It is too soon to evaluate this effort, but there is some significance in the fact that it has coincided with the revived interest in such spectacular evangelistic figures as Billy Graham and Bryan Green. Here are men who are able to reach literally hundreds of thousands of people, filling the largest auditoriums and stadiums in the country.

## V

One of the most encouraging factors for the future of Christianity is the genuine ecumenicity of all of the leading modern evangelists. Wherever E. Stanley Jones speaks, there we have a capacity audience. Jones' interest in the reunion of Christendom is a passion to which he gives much time in all of his public appearances as well as in his wide writing. Wherever the Japanese Christian, Toyohiko Kagawa, speaks, there likewise we have standing room only. The missions of both men have been under the leadership of the Federal (now the National) Council of Churches. Both men are leaders in the ecumenical movement.

The English Anglican evangelist Bryan Green has enabled the Episcopal Church here in America to enter actively the ranks of the denominations interested in and promoting the highest type of mass evangelism. Bryan Green's crowds are no less large than those of the more

<sup>11</sup> Schaeffer, C. E., *op. cit.*, p. 10.

colorful Billy Graham. Green has been able to pack the largest cathedrals and auditoriums in New York, Washington, and Boston. The entrance of the Episcopalians into the field of evangelism is most significant. It underscores what Dean Sperry of Harvard said not long ago, "One expects, therefore, that the Christian ministry of the next few years, without forfeiting its public offices, will concern itself more fully than in the immediate past, with its 'Cure of Souls'."<sup>12</sup> Bryan Green is as ecumenically minded as we would expect one to be who had come under the influence of William Temple. His meetings have been an outstanding success because, as is true of all mass evangelistic efforts, Christians of all denominations have rallied to his support. In briefing a group of fellow Episcopalians on his mission to be held in Boston, he said, "Congregational singing will be quite good because there will be a large group of Methodists present!"

However, it is in such a man as Billy Graham that we see the inevitable pressure toward the ecumenical view that evangelism exerts. Graham has the training and background of one raised in fundamentalist circles, yet by and large he has shown a commendable broad-mindedness and co-operative spirit. This was certainly true when he skyrocketed to national fame, and will continue to be true if he is not captured by those who are more interested in maintaining a theological position than in real evangelism. True evangelism rises above the narrowness of theological terminology. Its first concern is that men might be won to Christ at all costs. "I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some," said the great apostle to the Gentiles. It is significant that Charles ("Chuck") Templeton, the latest appointee to the active staff of the Department of Evangelism of the National Council of Churches, and one incidentally who is doing a top-flight piece of work, began his ministry in the Youth for Christ Movement.

Those of us present at the luncheon which introduced Graham to the Boston ministers were especially impressed by his ecumenical spirit. In speaking on the need for a revival in our day, he referred favorably and fervently to the work of the Federal Council of Churches in its United Evangelistic Advance, with its plans for 143,000 evangelistic services in the coming year. He mentioned the ministries of Bishop Stephen Neill and Bryan Green, of the Anglican Church, with the utmost favor. All of us felt our hearts strangely warmed as he went on, "When and if the Communists come to America, they are not going to ask if we are Baptists

<sup>12</sup> *Christendom*, Spring 1946, p. 209.

or Episcopalians, but if we are Christians, before they shoot us. Christ can unite fundamentalists, of which I am one, and so-called modernists about the cross. We've got to forget our differences. The job of winning this nation for Christ is too large for any one evangelist or any one type of evangelism." In the entire eighteen days of the Graham meetings in Boston, there was not a single note of criticism of his ministerial brethren or of the work of other churches or Christian bodies. His co-operative attitude is a very significant fact, for Graham has the confidence of fundamentalists. He can be a large factor in bridging the gap between them and ecumenically minded Christians.

In a great city-wide meeting in Portland, Oregon, Graham advocated close co-operation between fundamentalists and progressive ministers and churches. "He cast his ballot in favor of co-operation declaring there was room in the world for both and there was work to be done."<sup>13</sup> Graham's broad-mindedness in this area has even caused a mild controversy among some of his Southern Baptist brethren. During an evangelistic effort in Texas, Graham naturally wanted all Christians to join in his meetings. The editor of the Baptist paper there in the state took issue with this co-operative effort only because Southern Baptists, he said, are "winning more souls to Christ than any other group on earth. That is what evangelism means and it is the primary business of every church. Other denominational groups are beginning to employ our methods and we are glad. It will mean more souls saved. We ought to pray that God may use all evangelists, our own *and union evangelists* [*italics mine*] in winning the lost to a saving knowledge of Christ."<sup>14</sup> The editor is rightly concerned in the winning of men to our Lord Jesus. The exclusiveness of his background is evident, yet it is also apparent that his phrase "and union evangelists" shows how an evangelistic passion tends to press one into the larger view. This will grow as it becomes increasingly clear that winning the world to Christ is too large for any one denomination.

Our thesis is still valid even though Graham, when addressing the Southern Baptist Convention at San Francisco in June of 1951, said that the hope of Christianity in America lay in that convention and commended them for not affiliating with any other group. There is every evidence that Graham momentarily went against his better co-operative spirit in trying to square himself with the narrow views of some in his audience. Incidentally liberal and ecumenically minded Christians make a great mis-

<sup>13</sup> *Christian Evangelist*, December 12, 1950.

<sup>14</sup> *Baptist Standard*, October 19, 1950, p. 4.

take in looking down their theological noses at some of the literalisms and the methods of a man like Graham. They forget that it is often these very things that make for a mass appeal.

A dozen years ago Hendrik Kraemer wrote, "A return to the pristine enthusiasm for evangelism and a new vision of what this implies in word and deed in the present complicated world is needed."<sup>15</sup> We are seeing his words fulfilled in this day. The world will be won to Christ, not necessarily in our generation, but it will come, for our Lord has both prayed and prophesied. "That they all may be one . . . that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Missions, evangelism, and Christian oneness are a triumvirate that go together. Our generation has seen that, given sufficient time, one inevitably leads to the other. Let us take heart and move forward, for God is mighty and the needs of men for the gospel message have never been greater.

---

<sup>15</sup> Kraemer, H., *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*. Harper & Brothers, 1938, p. 60.

# Industrial Evangelism

CECIL THOMPSON

**P**ERHAPS the three fields now most urgently calling for immediate attention in the realm of evangelism are our vast, fast-growing suburban areas, the neglected rural areas, and the varied and shifting industrial areas. Into and through and from these areas, a veritable flood of human traffic is flowing. Just as the waters take their color from the river banks and bed, so these vast rivers of human life can be colored and molded by the influences of the church and Christian influences exerted upon them. These three areas today, if controlled and influenced by the church, can easily decide the future of American Christian democracy. Here is the crucible. Here is the birthplace. Here is the seedbed for tomorrow's spiritual and moral power. And the church has hitherto done less in the field of industrial evangelism than in any other field.

This article deals largely with industrial evangelism in the field of the textile industry and particularly in the southeastern states. The author is not familiar with the vast industrial areas of the North and the West. Nor are we very familiar with the mining, timber, manufacturing, and atomic developments. The problems there are similar and yet different.

Evangelism is not a segmentary procedure nor confined to any one type or method. There are no set rules nor any magic tricks. More books of high quality are being written just now in the field of evangelism than ever before. But the best book yet written on evangelism is the Book of Acts. The best case studies yet presented are those of Jesus in the Gospels. We must remember that our message is the same with all people. Sin is the same; but the attitudes, ways of life, daily interests, vary among different groups, and the approaches to them must therefore vary.

## THE BACKGROUND

There can be no real understanding or development of a worthwhile program without consideration of the background involved. Only

---

CECIL THOMPSON, B.D., S.T.M., D.D., is Professor of Evangelism and Church Extension at Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia. He has conducted evangelistic campaigns and now directs field work for this Seminary, which for six years has served the entire area of the South.

as we understand and evaluate the factors concerned can we settle upon a procedure. At this point we sail between Scylla and Charybdis. We must not lose ourselves in analysis or we will not get the job done. We must not stumble blindly into battle without estimating both our resources and the enemy and the terrain.

(1) Significant changes are taking place in industrial communities. We need first of all to see what has been happening in the industrial life of our nation. There have been *geographical shifts of industry*, from North and East to South and West. A veritable flood of textile industry, for instance, has been pouring into the Piedmont section of the South, into Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. Vast agricultural areas have been industrialized. This has drained agricultural people into a more mechanized way of life and from the wide open spaces into closer living quarters.

*Decentralization of larger industrial areas* into smaller and scattered communities is in progress. This trend may have several reasons, one of which may be national defense and another, the economic problems involved.

*New relationships between management and labor* have been developing and new attitudes forming in many textile communities. Whether unconsciously or voluntarily, sometimes through sheer force and necessity, these wholesome and needed changes have come. The riots and strikes in the Southern textile communities of several years ago and the bitter labor feuds are being dissolved by better understanding between labor and management. Many improvements in community life, home life, and social, recreational, and spiritual welfare are being promoted by management. For instance, many industrial concerns have built excellent community houses and employed trained community leaders, nurses, coaches, etc. Many mill villages where no one owned his own home are now places of individual ownership. This develops an entirely different economy and attitude toward life, schools, and churches on the part of labor.

Because of these better living conditions and better relationships, in many textile communities labor unions are unpopular and are even definitely opposed by the laboring man. How much better and easier it is to develop spiritual life and promote the church and her program in this changed attitude and atmosphere!

*The economic conditions have undergone great changes* in industrial areas in the past decade. The laboring man today is well paid. Where two or three members of a family work in a textile plant, the income is



often much larger than that of a teacher, minister, or others in the white-collar class. But the laboring man has not learned to save or invest, nor does much of this enlarged income go into ownership of homes, land, insurance, better organized community improvement, and the church. Rather it is spent and often wasted on cars, furniture, gadgets, and fleeting and often doubtful pleasures. A broad field of service and wholesome guidance thus opens to the church. All of this is a part of evangelism.

(2) Industrial communities have their own special attitudes and ways of life. Every profession makes its own impression upon human nature. While all races, nationalities, and human beings have most things in common, there are distinct differences in attitudes among various groups. There are differences between the urban life, thought, and economy, the rural, and the industrial. One does not deal with the man on Fifth Avenue as he does with the man in the Bowery. Jesus knew how to deal with both. One does not deal with the rugged mountain people as he does with the professional city-dwellers. There is an industrial mind, and specifically a textile mind. The pattern of life and labor diverges from all other patterns. I have heard people who have lived and worked in mill villages many times state this difference. It is very evident in religious work and particularly in the field of evangelism.

*Home life* is different and often hectic, even though the homes are increasingly owned by labor. This in itself promotes an entirely different attitude toward schools, community life, and church. Shift work can easily throw normal family life completely out of gear and make a normal church program and attendance impossible. It is extremely difficult to maintain regular attendance during evangelistic meetings in many communities. It is very difficult to make pastoral calls on homes where certain members of the family sleep in the day time and others at night. Nor can one do much pastoral calling in the mills themselves, as is possible among agricultural or office or store workers. Oftentimes family life disintegrates; children have no regular family life or playgrounds, but roam the streets, because the house is small and the father must sleep during the day. This may give larger opportunity for special church activities and services to children and families. A full-orbed program of evangelism would include these.

Among industrial people mechanization, regimentation, working on shifts and doing the same thing, week after week and year after year, *does something to individualism and creative initiative*. Just what happens is difficult to explain. Recently, the successful head of a large soft drink

bottling concern stated that he had never found a mill worker a successful salesman on one of his trucks. They have lost the ability to sell, or their initiative and creative aggressiveness have been stifled. Quite frequently a man who has spent years in the armed services finds it almost impossible to adapt himself to any other type of service. He is used to following orders and being entirely under discipline. A similar effect often follows in industrial, textile, and highly mechanized employment. This affects the daily attitudes also toward church and community life, home life, and an aggressive religious life. Perhaps the church has some obligation to counteract this effect and develop a normal interest and attitude.

A third element is the *economic attitude and careless habits* of industrial people. Oftentimes and especially today, labor is getting good wages. Except for seasons of shut-down and strikes, the take-home pay is good, especially where more than one member of the family works. Yet, there seems to be no disposition or desire toward a well-planned program to get ahead, to save for the future, to buy insurance, to own a piece of property or land. Likewise, many churches in these areas could easily have a splendid program of finance, pay good salaries, and maintain an excellent level of religious activity; but they do not (though there are some exceptions).

Often the mill builds the church, or outside agencies are asked to help. The wage earners too often spend nearly all their money on gadgets, cars, furniture, radios, or even unnecessary or doubtful recreational ventures; and there is too little sense of responsibility toward safeguarding their own economic future or developing a worthwhile community social and religious life and program. It is our feeling that a great opportunity is open to the church to counsel sympathetically, educate and lead these people into a better way of life. Evangelism without a proper sense of the Christian use of time and money is an incomplete and inadequate evangelism. It applies to all of life, in every phase, and in every realm.

Another element that complicates industrial evangelism or religious life is *the use of time*. Often it is both a blessing and a curse. It is difficult to foresee what may happen in special services or on week-ends. Trips and visits to distant relatives may wreck the church's program. Somehow you never know exactly what to count on, particularly if there are three shifts of eight hours each in a community. And often these shifts change from time to time. While conducting an eight-day evangelistic campaign in a textile community, one hard-working pastor stated that he simply could not understand nor analyze this irresponsibility. He knew and had

grown up in rural church work, but was lost in the textile community. Yet many of the textile people themselves have had a rural background.

Another element usually found is that the people who live in the mill village or who compose the laboring class seldom feel at home or mix well in the program and activities of the adjacent down-town church where the white-collar group or management worship. There are exceptions, but for the most part, it is usually true that it is extremely difficult and well-nigh impossible to break these barriers down. This condition ought not to exist, but it usually does. Here again there is need for a comprehensive program of understanding, co-operation, and community-wide planning.

Too often there is a *cleavage between labor and capital or management*. Wonderful progress is being made in this field and here again the church can be of great help. There are many communities where management has taken the lead and where there is a fine spirit of brotherhood, understanding, and fellowship. It is my feeling from observation that many Christian leaders in industry have borne a real interest in this field and done far more to create better relationships and living conditions than is today being accomplished through labor unions and strikes. It is also possible at times that some progress may have come only through strikes and organized attempts to alleviate conditions. However, it seems today that leaders and owners in textile and other industrial businesses are revealing a far more sympathetic and Christian concern for the laboring man and his family's welfare than ever before.

There are many textile and other industrial communities where there are wonderful programs of activities in the fields of education, health, recreation, athletics and social life. In some there are splendid community buildings, playgrounds, and even paid professional leaders to minister to the varied needs. Oftentimes many of these facilities and resources are or could be utilized by the church. Seldom has the church of itself developed an adequate and comprehensive program for all ages and needs.

There are many industrial areas where there are no mill villages, but the employees own their own homes, live at a distance, and enjoy the usual and normal home life and church life of other working people. Dealing with these people is similar to work with any other group except that often their sense of financial stewardship is not as keen as it should be. Often textile workers who live on their own farm lands, and there are thousands of them all over the Southland, allow their farms to lie unused, neglected, and even to wash away. This is due to the ready cash of pay day. Here

again is a rich opportunity for the church to render a great service in instruction, education, and leadership.

#### THE PRESENT PREVAILING EVANGELISTIC SET-UP

Once again we must deal in generalities. For the most part, evangelism has perhaps made more progress in some respects in urban areas than in rural and industrial. Urban people will accept, adapt, and try new methods far more readily than rural or industrial churches and communities. Again, people will use all the latest gadgets in their business and homes, and yet will hang on to the sawdust trail in evangelism. They do not easily nor quickly change their religious mores, music, or worship. The result is that the old-fashioned mass revival movement for the most part is still about all there is to the usual program of evangelism in industrial and rural communities in the South. In other words, once a year—and no more—is the total program. Old gospel songs, loud and long preaching, high-pressure invitations and propositions—these sum up the picture rather concisely. But there are omens of better days ahead.

It is well to point out some of the elements entering into the pattern of the present-day religious and evangelistic program.

(1) Ordinarily it follows a *fixed pattern*. A visiting pastor or outside evangelist preaches either once or twice a day for six to fourteen days. There may be a morning service composed entirely of women and children and few older men, and not too well attended. There is an evening service—old gospel hymns or songs, sometimes of the emotional or cheaper quality, and then a sermon, usually followed by one, two, or more propositions of various types and often under pressure. The quality of the message, both in the singing and the preaching, leaves much to be desired. Yet, it is amazing how the church has lived on a lean diet! It is also true that the established urban churches would do well to get some of the warmth, enthusiasm, conviction, spirit, and fellowship prevalent in these meetings.

(2) Another characteristic of present-day evangelism in such areas is a *narrowness of attitude, doctrine, and spirit*. This attitude develops a method, type of message, and strategy most difficult to outgrow or replace. Often one denomination criticizes, attacks, and ridicules another, declaring the others are headed straight for Hades. This makes community church co-operation difficult. Other churches desiring a more Christian approach and a more wholesome, better-rounded program, find that the people are molded to certain ideas of procedure; they may respond to nothing but

cut-and-dried mass evangelism of a shallow, bombastic kind. This does not mean that a better way is not possible, but that it is most difficult.

Much of the preaching is of a negative, pessimistic, eschatological nature, rather than the positive, hopeful, spiritual glad tidings which is the true emphasis of the New Testament gospel. Sin, judgment, hell—these truly need to be given their due; but they need to be accompanied by the good news of mercy, redemptive love, forgiveness, and victorious life now.

(3) Often there enters into mass evangelism in industrial areas, particularly among certain sects such as the Holiness or Pentecostal, much emphasis on faith healing. Such meetings are held in tents and other gathering places; some of them last far into the night and draw large crowds. They are very informal, loud, intensely emotional, and quite frequently seem to produce numerous converts; but apparently they develop inferior Christians and do little good to the total moral life of the community. They are like forest fires at night—in a way beautiful, creating heat, burning all the vegetation, but leaving the soil poorer each time the forest burns. Oftentimes sects and communities live on successive revivals, in a bondage similar to that of a narcotic addict.

The writer does not want to give the impression of undervaluing or criticizing efforts of mass revival or evangelism. Both are helpful and profitable, but often they are used in a wrong manner and too often even to the exclusion of other spiritual methods which need to be developed and employed. Certain foods, if used too much or to the exclusion of others, can produce anemia, pellagra, and other ill effects. So in evangelism distorted diets can produce spiritual distemper and even spiritual apathy.

Recently in a large gathering of textile leaders in Greenville, South Carolina, an experienced and evangelistically minded Christian layman stated that wherever the older and established churches had a well-rounded and progressive church program in textile communities, the smaller sects are hardly ever found. This is a good observation. Where the Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians do not minister spiritually and otherwise to the community, then the sects come in easily and establish themselves. It is interesting to note the strength and progress which the smaller sects and Holiness groups have made. In many places, they have built nice church plants and pastors' homes; they operate church buses, and seem to be able to secure money and promote radio programs while the other denominations struggle along with the usual plodding progress or apathetic program with little life or attractiveness. Why is this? There are reasons.



The groups that gain and hold the attendance and interest of the masses have certain characteristics which lay hold upon certain elemental desires or inclinations of human nature. They emphasize the Bible—whether with correct interpretation or not—which appeals to the working class of people. They have intense convictions, even though the convictions may be centered upon a narrow or distorted truth; they believe in their cause. They have an emotional content in their faith and preaching which lends warmth to their evangelism. Oftentimes there may be more heat than light, but at least they have the heat, which is often lacking in the more staid denominations. There is an esprit de corps and a spirit of fraternal purpose. The smaller sects often emphasize the necessity for separation from certain actions considered sinful, such as use of tobacco, cosmetics, movies, and other worldly things. Their religion costs something. Then again they often demand a definite system of tithing and stewardship—which secures the resources for buildings and radio programs.

These groups, along with the Southern Baptists, oftentimes have uneducated pastors and preachers, but what is lost on the educational level is made up in the field of enthusiasm and evangelistic zeal. What is lacking in doctrinal and theological discernment is evidently made up by their common touch with the everyday lives of the people. Two things can happen, and perhaps both are slowly taking place. The smaller sects with their enthusiasm and missionary zeal are gradually taking on culture, polish, and acquiring a more educated leadership. They are building attractive churches and homes for their pastors. Will they lose their zeal as they gain these things? On the other hand, our more dignified and staid churches are beginning to realize they must have more zeal, and missionary spirit, and enter into the work-a-day world of these people and speak their language. At the same time, they can give a better rounded and more positive message and method to the whole religious life of these communities. Each type of church must absorb some elements from the other.

A Presbyterian evangelist, who has been a successful pastor with textile people and who knows the total picture, recently said that the smaller sects have a narrow and limited doctrinal message which centers almost completely on three phases of Christian truth—sin, the death of Christ, and eschatology. This practically exhausts their emphasis and message. The other great doctrines, such as the resurrection, are not in their usual presentation, which leaves an impoverished content. I believe there is a tremendous challenge for the older and larger groups to seize upon these



opportunities, make the right approach, present a complete and wholesome message, and minister to these people in a marvelous manner.

We must rediscover the elemental principles of the first-century church—emphasis on faith healing, the Pentecostal experience and power of the Holy Spirit, the responsibility of personal and group witnessing, the power of prayer, intense devotion to the cause of the Kingdom of God, the joy of Christian fellowship, and the naturalness of teaching and preaching everywhere and to every man in all places. Suffice it to say that the program of both regular church and pastoral ministry, as well as that of evangelism, has been inadequate, segmentary, lopsided, too constricted, seasonal, and impoverished, as administered by both the smaller sects and the older denominations. The one needs to be enriched and widened, and the other needs to be warmed up and given a better everyday approach to the working man and his family.

#### HOW SHALL WE DEVELOP A BETTER EVANGELISTIC APPROACH?

The answer to this question involves several factors: a better trained and qualified pastoral leadership; the development of a different and more progressive attitude in the minds of the people themselves as to a more comprehensive meaning of evangelism; the enlargement of the total program and ministry of the church in the community to every phase of the life of the people, socially, economically, physically, and spiritually; a patient and persistent long-range willingness to accomplish the desired results even by adopting and adapting some techniques not hitherto used; and finally, vision and creative use of great unseen, untouched, and thus far unused resources. We are now ready to suggest some of these channels.

(1) We must have a *resident pastoral leadership*, trained for this type of ministry—knowing the people, their problems and ways of life, having the ability to speak their language and lead them into a progressive and wholesome way of life. Nonresident pastors can no more develop a growing church and ministry adequate to the people's needs than a farmer can grow a crop and live a long distance from his field, seldom seeing the crop or laboring in the field.

(2) There are vast resources available today which can and must be used. *The radio and even television* are potent fields. The enlarged financial incomes of industrial people need to be guided into wise channels.

(3) *Visual education* affords opportunity for splendid enrichment and enlargement today. Many splendid filmstrips are being developed and are available to present stewardship, Christian family life, prayer, Bible

study, witnessing, in an inexpensive and creative manner. This is a splendid way to present the gospel, as well as by word of mouth, and it often reaches the mind as well as the heart.

(4) A community program of *wholesome Christian recreation*, centered upon family groups to develop a richer spirit of fellowship and understanding, may bring many people into the church who otherwise would never be touched. Some churches oppose church suppers or any form of recreation; but these, if properly used, become channels for evangelism.

(5) Various projects such as *youth camps, vacation Bible schools, prayer and Bible study cells* open large doors to new contacts. If properly planned and pervaded with warm fellowship and attractive approach, they can reach many people as yet unreached.

(6) There must be a *richer and simpler preaching and teaching of the gospel*. Evangelism has fallen into disrepute largely because of the poor, ineffective, and even offensive manner in which the message has sometimes been presented. Clinics on preaching could easily be held in many areas on a co-operative basis to help pastors develop better preaching methods. There is a growing return to such elements as Bible preaching, expository preaching, and better evangelistic preaching. There are splendid books available today on various phases of evangelism.<sup>1</sup> Evangelistic preaching must be marked by simplicity, abiding sincerity, directness, practical application, plentiful illustration, heart-warming truth, a sense of urgency; it must breathe the love of God, and be directed toward a verdict.

(7) Vast fields of evangelistic opportunity are open to a personal, spiritual, pastoral ministry today. Nothing can take the place of *pastoral work*. The evangelistic pastor must not only have the desire and ability to do the work of an evangelist, but he fails if he does not train his laity to have concern for souls and the ability to reach others for Christ.

(8) *Personal counseling, cells of young married couples*, and emphasis upon Christian family life through fellowship groups within the church can create a wholesome, year-round program which may bring many unconverted into the church family circle.

We are more and more convinced that the purpose and program of the church and the definition of discipleship must be enlarged. The local church must think in terms of the community, not only of its own constitu-

<sup>1</sup> A few of these are: Green, Bryan, *The Practice of Evangelism*. Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1952. Neill, Stephen C., *Fulfill Thy Ministry*. Harper & Brothers, 1952. Whitesell, F. D., *Basic New Testament Evangelism*. Zondervan Publishing House, 1949. Blackwood, A. W., *Evangelism in the Home Church*. Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1942. Sweet, L. M., *The Pastoral Ministry in Our Time*. Fleming H. Revell Co., 1949. Munro, H. C., *Fellowship Evangelism Through Church Groups*. Bethany Press, 1951.

ency. The pastor must envision every person as a prospect until he learns differently. Every Christian must have a concern and desire to share the Abundant Life with his friend and neighbor. And somehow our presentation of the gospel must be so vivid, real, and personal that those who belong to the church are born anew and actually belong to the Body of Christ. Evangelism must go beyond birth into the development and growth of the new convert into discipleship and service.

With the poor presentation of the gospel, the poor sense of urgency and motivation, the lean diet of truth, and the impoverished program developed and used, it is amazing how the church has grown. This is one of the proofs of the Divine nature and possession of the church. No other organization or business could have survived by such methods!

The renewed interest in mass evangelism, and the renewal of the New Testament method through home visitation evangelism, give hope for the future. There are also other suggestions which reveal that both the organized church and even industrial leaders are concerned and interested. Several theological seminaries are now considering giving special training for ministers who desire to serve in industrial areas. There are already some industrial chaplains. A recent magazine article told of a most interesting program of spiritual ministry through an industrial chaplain in a large corporation in North Carolina.<sup>2</sup> At Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, a Presbyterian U. S. institution, there are numbers of theological students interested, and plans are under way to establish a professorship in the field of the Industrial Church. Recently two large groups of Presbyterian Textile Executives met in Greenville, South Carolina, and Atlanta, Georgia, to discuss and endorse such a program.

A new day is dawning in the field of evangelism. We need a ministry that is better trained and equipped to do this particular type of work. Never have we had more people to reach nor finer resources available. It challenges the creative ingenuity of the church. We have the message, we can develop the method. The industrial world and the masses await the men of God who are equal to the opportunity. The ancient heathen king of Assyria once offered a multitude of horses to the King of Israel if he would provide the horsemen (Isa. 36:8). This is the situation today in the field of industrial evangelism. We have the message and the method—where are the men? "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth laborers (sufficient) unto the harvest." (Luke 10:2)

<sup>2</sup> "They Put a Parson on the Payroll." *American Magazines*, January, 1952.

# Conversion and the Means of Grace

BERNHARD CITRON

## I. EQUAL USE OF THE MEANS OF GRACE

CONVERSION is not an extraordinary experience in the life of an extraordinary person, but the decisive change in the life of the ordinary Christian. Even sudden conversions usually occur under normal circumstances and in ordinary surroundings. One man was converted in his study and another in the workshop; to one person Christ showed himself in a garden and to another during a walk. The change might take place during a lecture or during a church service. My old Session Clerk who was a master butcher used to say that he was converted at the sausage machine; while General Booth attended a very uninspiring service, when one Bible word suddenly touched his heart.

Because conversion is meant for ordinary people under ordinary circumstances, God employs ordinary means for their regeneration. These ordinary means of grace have been dispensed by the church from its very beginning on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-42). They are the Word of God, the Sacraments, Prayer, and Christian Fellowship. All Christians agree on the importance of some means of grace during and after conversion; but the emphasis on any of the four means differs from one branch of the church to another. Among those groups in the church which are commonly known as Catholic the greatest importance is attached to the Sacraments, while in the so-called Protestant churches the Word of God in the sense of Scripture is chiefly stressed. In other groups which might be called by the collective name of Enthusiasts, conversion is most closely related to the devotional life, while the Social Gospel movement is deeply concerned with the activity of Christian fellowship as means of corporate conversion.

Nevertheless the division of churches according to their most favored means of grace permits many exceptions. Many "Catholics" (both Roman and Anglican) are deeply concerned with the idea of Christian fellowship, while many social gospellers are known to be convinced sacramentalists.

---

BERNHARD CITRON, Ph.D., is Minister of the Pleasance Church and Warden of New College Settlement, Edinburgh, Scotland, and author of *New Birth*, a historical study of the doctrine of conversion. Born of Jewish parents in Berlin, he is a convert himself. This summer he is transferring to a charge in the United Church of Canada.

The majority of "enthusiasts" are also fundamentalists and therefore as much influenced by Scripture reading as by prayer. The Reformed Churches in general have experienced a revival of biblical theology and of sacramental worship, while Christian fellowship has been recognized as an essential part of the church's work. A group of Anglican Evangelicals recently produced a document whose aim is the reconciliation of "catholic" and "protestant" traditions "in the common life of the Body of Christ, wherever this can be done without compromising those fundamental truths to depart from which would be apostasy from Christ."<sup>1</sup> This report takes a very wide view of the means of grace which are available for the conversion of mankind.

Where the Word and Sacraments are, there the gospel can come to men in saving power and unite them in Christ. But it is only a minimum. The whole outward life of the Church is intended to be the vehicle and expression of its inward life of fellowship in Christ. Therefore everything which outwardly binds the Church together is a means of grace to be thankfully received.

It is undoubtedly true that God has ordained means of grace in his church apart from the Word and the Sacraments, but most of these "other means" form part of the hitherto much neglected fourth means of grace—Christian fellowship.

The significance of the first mass conversion on the day of Pentecost was the fact that the church dispensed the four means of grace equally. The Word of God was preached by Peter and the other apostles. Prayers were offered by the whole church. Those who accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior were baptized and immediately admitted to the Lord's Supper. The fellowship of the church expressed itself in such acts of love as the pooling of all financial resources among the brethren. "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

If they had concentrated on the right doctrine to the exclusion of other means of grace, a Christian Pharisaism would have been formed. If the correct ritual for initiation of new converts by baptism and the continued celebration of the Lord's Supper had been the only practice of the church, Christianity would have developed into another mystery religion and nothing more. If the devotional life in separation from the world had been the church's aim, the Christians would have continued the pietism of the Essenes; and if fellowship among themselves had been the principal policy of the apostles, then they might have gone back to any of those

<sup>1</sup> *The Fullness of Christ*. Report presented to the Archbishop of Canterbury, London, 1950, p. 65.



brotherhoods from which the former zealots among them had first come. But by using all the means of grace equally, they helped to create that atmosphere in the church which is composed of teaching and devotion, visible signs and invisible gifts, spiritual and material realities. Into such a community the 3,000 new converts, who were then the vast majority of the whole church, could be integrated.

The task of modern evangelism is similar to that of the Apostolic Church. The recognition of the means of grace as divinely appointed ordinances for integrating new converts into the church is again needed.

## II. MEANS OF GRACE INSTRUMENTAL FOR CONVERSION

On the day of Pentecost "they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). Prominently mentioned among the means of grace are Word and Sacraments. But in which form was the Word addressed to three thousand people? In John Calvin's dictum "there was a great multitude converted unto Christ by one sermon."<sup>2</sup> Protestant theologians have always been inclined to attribute power of conversion not only to the actual text of Scripture, but especially to the preaching of the Word. This power is given to any minister of the Word as much as to the Apostle Peter. The emphasis on preaching is quite obvious in the Shorter Catechism. The answer to the question, "How is the Word made effectual to salvation?" is given in this form: "The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort through faith and salvation."<sup>3</sup>

Such a doctrine might be contradicted on two grounds, a subjective and an objective. (1) The preacher could be tempted to sell his own fancy ideas for gospel truth. The result for the unfortunate listener would either be that he remains unaffected by the tirades of the minister, or that he allows himself to be "converted" to the minister's personal views, and not to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. So many "topical sermons" are preached today that the danger of using a text as a pretext for proclaiming "another gospel" is as real today as it was in the days when Paul wrote the Epistle to the Galatians (Gal. 1:8). On the other hand, the Word of God has lost nothing of its ancient power, and that message has still the strongest appeal which is faithful to the Bible, helpful to the

<sup>2</sup> Calvin, John, *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, Acts 2:41.

<sup>3</sup> *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Q. & A. 89.



individual worshiper, and related to the problems of the day. Strictly speaking, not the sermon as such, but the Word of God set forth, explained and applied by way of preaching, is instrumental in conversion.

(2) The other ground on which the converting power of the sermon might be questioned is an objective one. It was raised by the Council of Trent and is still typical for the "Catholic" view on preaching.

To be asked to listen to a sermon must certainly seem to one, devoid of all spiritual qualities and susceptibilities, as the most singular demand—not less singular than if we were asked to prepare for flying; nay more singular, for . . . in default of every spiritual organ for understanding the sermon, he could not even understand what was the proposed significance.<sup>4</sup>

It is probably quite true that at a time when the whole community was under the influence of the church, sermons were addressed to those who professed to be Christians. A non-Christian would have been quite unable to understand the subject matter of such sermons, and those parishioners whose religious conviction did not go beyond such compulsory outward observances as attending church never understood properly what they were taught Sunday by Sunday. The apostolic sermon was different. The preacher in the early church could not expect his hearers to know anything about the Christian faith. He had to make contact where contact was possible. Peter in his Pentecost sermon and Paul in his address to the Athenians used object lessons which were familiar to the Jewish or Gentile hearer in much the same way as modern preachers would try to attract the outsider. The objective argument against the converting power of preaching is today hardly more convincing than it would have been in the early church. The sermon therefore might be instrumental in converting sinners if the contents are strictly biblical and the form adapted to the interest and understanding of the general hearer.

Closely connected with the Word are the Sacraments. Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration par excellence. Oscar Cullman has shown that baptism plays the same part in the life of the individual that the Cross plays in the whole history of salvation. "The parallelism between 'being baptized' and 'dying with Christ,' whose origin goes back to the life of Jesus at his own Baptism by John in Jordan, is traceable through the whole of the New Testament."<sup>5</sup> (See Rom. 6:1ff. and I Cor. 1:13, where the concepts of baptism and death are used interchangeably.) Baptism

<sup>4</sup> Möhler, John Adam, *Symbolic of the Doctrinal Differences Between Catholics and Protestants*, London, 1906, p. 60.

<sup>5</sup> Cullman, Oscar, *Baptism in the New Testament*. London, 1950, p. 15.

in the New Testament was understood as the mystical union between the crucified Lord and the repentant sinner.

During the subapostolic age a gradual change takes place from this mystical to an almost magical conception of baptismal regeneration. Baptism is not only the visible sign of the believer's dying with Christ, and therefore a synonym for the Cross, but a spiritual force of its own, and therefore equal to the Cross. For instance, the Epistle of Barnabas (early second century) contains this twin beatitude: "Blessed are they that set their hope on the cross and go down into the water."<sup>6</sup> Soon baptism assumes regenerative powers of its own. This becomes very clear in the "Shepherd of Hermas" (about A.D. 150), who thus exalts the power of baptism:

It was necessary for them (the unconverted) . . . to rise up through water, that they might be made alive: for otherwise they could not enter into the Kingdom of God, except they had put aside the deadness of their former life. . . . For before a man . . . has borne the name of the Son of God, he is dead; but when he hath received the seal, he layeth aside his deadness, and resumeth life. The seal then is the water: so they go down into the water dead, and they come up alive.<sup>7</sup>

The Shepherd of Hermas uses the word-pair "laying aside" and "resuming," which had been used before by the Good Shepherd who said, "I lay down my life that I might take it again" (John 10:17). As we have seen before, "being baptized" and "dying with Christ" have become interchangeable expressions. To the Shepherd of Hermas, baptism is obviously man's complete identification with the death of Christ. It might also mean Christ's perfect identification with the baptized person. For as he laid aside his garments before washing his disciples' feet, and took them up again (John 13:4, 12), so a man lays his garments aside before baptism and takes them up again.

Popular belief does not stop at this point of supreme mystery, but develops a magic conception of the sacrament, by which the use of the proper liturgy guarantees the efficacy of baptism. Characteristic for this magic idea is the legend of St. Genesius. Before his conversion Genesius was a well-known comedian who staged a mock baptism in the Coliseum for the amusement of the Emperor Diocletian and of the Roman populace. Genesius appeared in the white garments of a Christian neophyte and caused hilarity by his strange appearance. Then another actor brought a pail of water on the stage, and imitating Christian prayers baptized his colleague by pouring water over his head. The audience roared with laughter.

<sup>6</sup> *Epistle of Barnabas* XI:8.

<sup>7</sup> *The Shepherd of Hermas*, Sim. IX: 16.

Everybody expected now a funny speech from Genesius. Instead, the actor remained silent, his eyes seemed to be lost in wonder. To the Emperor, who grew more and more impatient, the answer was given that Genesius had seen the heavens open, while the water of baptism ran down his head and his body. Genesius was promptly martyred and was later canonized by the Church. In his case baptism worked "like magic." Neither the celebrant nor the baptismal candidate were prepared for the supreme act of faith, and yet the mock baptism became a real baptism, and conversion was wrought by the sacramental act alone.

If baptism is considered as the chief instrument of conversion, then the whole effect of genuine conversion is ascribed to baptism. Cyprian (third century) explained that before his conversion he could not understand "that a man quickened to a new life in the laver of saving water should be able to put off what he had previously been."<sup>8</sup> But after the stain of former years had been washed away and a second birth had taken place, "doubtful things at once began to assure themselves to me, hidden things to be revealed, dark things to be enlightened: what before seemed difficult, began to suggest a means of accomplishment; what had been thought impossible to be capable of being achieved." This is the typical experience of any converted Christian. Cyprian attributed the change to the influence of baptism, others might attribute their conversion to the power of the Word, or to the voice of prayer, but the result is always the same—that which had been impossible in the world has become a religious possibility.

From the fourth century onward regeneration has been identified in "Catholic" doctrine with justification, and man "is justified through the laver of Baptism."<sup>9</sup> This doctrine determined the medieval conception of the New Birth and found its final shape in the decisions of the Council of Trent which are still binding for Roman Catholics. "The Sacrament of Baptism which is the Sacrament of Faith" is the "instrumental cause" of justification.<sup>10</sup>

Even Augustine accepted the equation: "justification=regeneration=baptism," but he insisted on the union between Word and Sacrament. "Take the Word away, and what is the water of baptism but mere water?" Protestantism on the whole has accepted the Augustinian formula, "Word

<sup>8</sup> Cyprian, *Ad Donatum*, 3.

<sup>9</sup> Ambrose, *Epistolae*, 73:11.

<sup>10</sup> Council of Trent, Sess. VI:7.

and Sacraments," but has not stopped there. Three stages in the development of this "classical combination" have been distinguished by Professor Tillich: "in the first place 'the word as well as the sacraments,' next . . . 'the sacrament through the word' and (also) . . . especially in Protestantism (the) 'word without the sacrament.'" <sup>11</sup> Calvin adopted the conception, "word and sacrament," while Luther conceived the sacrament as being conveyed through the word. The second stage, "the sacrament through the word," is represented by Luther, who wrote, "Baptism is not just ordinary water, but water embedded into God's commandment and united with God's word." <sup>12</sup>

The third stage, "the word without the sacrament," is reached by those churches which practice "believer's baptism." A statement recently submitted to the Theological Commission of Faith and Order for the World Council of Churches clearly describes the Baptist position, which is one of word without the sacrament.

To Baptists, ordinances are not sacraments, that is, specially endowed vehicles of grace. . . . The fact is that there is no group of Christians anywhere to whom the ordinances are as utterly destitute of meaning from the standpoint of saving efficacy as they are in the thinking of Baptists. . . . They are teaching ordinances and valuable only because they symbolize the two truths which constitute the eternal gospel of grace; namely the Lord's death and his resurrection. <sup>13</sup>

Little is left of the Christ-mystique of the early Church! The believer's baptism is only the recognition of a previous conversion experience; as such it is not faith-creating. Quite different is "adult baptism" in churches in which infant baptism is the norm. The non-Christian is conscious of the fact that he brings nothing with him, as he is led to the font. He desires faith, not just greater faith or confirmation of faith, but simply faith. His prayer is, "I believe, help thou mine unbelief."

Next to baptism, Holy Communion has often been instrumental in conversion. It is said that Count Zinzendorf, who revived the Moravian Church in the eighteenth century, was led to God while listening to the Institution of the Lord's Supper. John Wesley, who in his younger days was closely connected with the Moravians, attributed great converting power to the Eucharist itself. "Experience shows the gross falsehood of that assertion that the Lord's Supper is not a converting ordinance. Ye are

<sup>11</sup> Tillich, Paul, *The Protestant Era*. London, p. 109.

<sup>12</sup> Luther, M., *Kleiner Katechismus, Das vierte Hauptstück*.

<sup>13</sup> *Ways of Worship*. London, 1951. Part I, ch. VI, "Baptist," by R. Clairbourne Johnson, U.S.A., p. 142.

the witnesses. For many present know that the very beginning of your conversion (perhaps in some the first deep conviction) was wrought at the Lord's Supper."<sup>14</sup>

It shows that the Evangelical conception of the Eucharist is just as "high" as the Catholic one. I can remember the impressive celebration of the Eucharist in front of thousands of kneeling men on a big square in Budapest on the occasion of the Eucharistic Congress. The Papal delegate at that congress, who later became Pope Pius XII, said in a broadcast that conversions often take place during a celebration like that. Who knows how much of it is due to mass suggestion and how much to the efficacy of the sacrament? But I doubt if any mass suggestion could have played a part in Communion services which I conducted in my Scottish congregation. Not an angel from heaven could have suggested anything to these good people which did not appeal to them. Yet the very act of breaking the bread and lifting the cup during the Communion Service never failed to impress the congregation. The means of grace were displayed in such a way that everyone knew he could avail himself of them for his spiritual benefit and growth in grace.

Prayers are always instrumental in man's conversion. On the one hand prayer presupposes at least the rudiments of faith, but at the same time they create real faith. Indeed, prayers can almost be identified with faith, as Emil Brunner said, "Faith lives on in prayer, faith is indeed nothing but prayer."<sup>15</sup>

The fourth means of grace which for many centuries had been neglected by the church, so that it is not even mentioned in the Larger and Shorter Catechism to the Westminster Confession, is Fellowship. Church life without fellowship is deficient in grace. This is not a modern invention. Paul was brought into the fellowship of Christian brethren in Damascus before his eyes were opened. Fellowship is the greatest witness of the church, without it no congregation can prosper and no minister fulfill his task. Its specific task in conversion is to convince both the members and the adherents of the church that God has need of them.

Movements like the Iona Community have done a great deal to lift the mission idea of the church out of its individualistic isolation and to integrate it into the mystical body of Christ and the ordinary fellowship of the Christian congregation. To the leader of the Iona Community fellowship is perhaps the most important means of grace. He writes: Christ's

<sup>14</sup> Wesley, John, *Journal*, 27th January, 1740.

<sup>15</sup> Brunner, Emil, *Our Faith*. London, 1949, p. 92f.



plan "is not that a number of separate persons must become united with him and in mutual isolation be his instruments for the redemption of the world. His instrument is a fellowship. . . . Constant and corporate mission belongs, therefore, to the essence of the church's life."<sup>16</sup>

Word and Sacraments, Prayer and Fellowship, all are together instrumental in bringing men and women to Christ.

### III. CONTINUITY

But who knows if they will stay there? The young convert is still on the mountaintop of experience, but he must go down into the valley of humdrum life again. He is greatly in love, but he must come home from his spiritual honeymoon with his beloved at his side. He is in a trance, but soon he will awaken. And the first question which he addresses to his beloved is, "What can I do?"

This question has always been asked immediately after conversion. The frequency with which it occurs in the New Testament seems to suggest some familiar formula in the Church of the Apostles. The catechumen asks, "What shall I do?" and he receives a definite answer for guidance.<sup>17</sup> He is not left in a haze like the convert to Communism who confessed, "I was running after the Party, thirsting to throw myself completely into her arms, and the more breathlessly I struggled to possess and to be possessed, the more elusive and unattainable she became."<sup>18</sup> The enthusiasm of the convert to Communism will be damped as soon as he discovers that the party which he loves does not care for his personal feelings. If the church remains evasive, her converts will feel the same. In many such cases the first fire of enthusiasm will just be extinguished, and the convert of yesterday realizes that he worshiped a "god that failed." If on the other hand a political or religious body is able to instill its ideology into the converts till they surrender even their own love and enthusiasm to the "cause," then will damped enthusiasm break forth into political or religious fanaticism.

The Church of Jesus Christ must never despise the enthusiasm of her children. Disillusionment and fanaticism are both unchristian. The Apostolic Church kept her converts from both. The revival of Pentecost was followed up by gradual integration of three thousand new members into the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. "They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers."

<sup>16</sup> MacLeod, George, *We Shall Rebuild*. Glasgow, 1945, p. 97.

<sup>17</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>18</sup> Koestler, A., and others, *The God That Failed*. London, 1950, p. 41.



The four means of grace guarantee the continuity of the newly found faith. Both "Catholics" and "Protestants" agree that the danger of lapsing can only be avoided if the Christian believer employs the means of grace for the improvement of his faith.

In the "Catholic" view the most important of these means are the Sacraments. The evangelical sacraments, Baptism and Holy Communion, are supplemented by other sacraments which are supposed to cover the whole lifetime of a Christian. Tertullian (about A.D. 200) indicated a sacramental follow-up to baptism: "Not that in the water we obtain the Holy Spirit, but in the water . . . we are cleansed and thus prepared for the Holy Spirit."<sup>19</sup> He then describes the sacramental acts that follow baptism: "unction . . . which runs down our flesh carnally but profits spiritually" and "the imposition of hands . . . then over our cleansed and blessed bodies willingly descends from the Father that Holiest Spirit." Later the "sacrament of penance" became the principal means by which regeneration was to be continued throughout life. The modern Roman Catholic view is still practically the same as that of the early Middle Ages: "Confirmation finishes the initial regeneration by making the reborn partake in Christ's anointing by the Spirit. Penance is a private and second 'emergency baptism.'"<sup>20</sup>

Over against this view that sacramental continuity requires a series of sacraments, "Protestants" have always maintained that the Sacrament of Baptism is sufficient for the whole process of regeneration. In times of distress "the faithful . . . may justly have recourse to their baptism," says Calvin,<sup>21</sup> and Luther rejoices, "Baptizatus sum." For this reason Protestantism has—strictly speaking—no other vow than the baptismal vow. The Confirmation vow of a person about to be admitted to the Lord's Table is only the repetition and confirmation of the baptismal vow, previously made by the parents of that person. Ordination and even marriage vows are further confirmations of the baptismal vow applied to a particular form of "service." The profession of faith remains the same for a baby, a young communicant, an ordained minister or elder, and—implicitly—for a Christian bride and bridegroom. The diligent use of the means of grace is also implied in the baptismal vow, in which the parents promise to bring their child up in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord and in the ways of God." Luther's "semel baptizatus sacramentaliter, semper baptizandus

<sup>19</sup> Tertullian, *On Baptism*, VI.

<sup>20</sup> *Ways of Worship: "Roman Catholic,"* F. G. van der Meer (Holland). London, 1951, p. 48.

<sup>21</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, IV: XV: 4.

fide" is still maintained by Lutheran and Reformed theologians. "The Holy Spirit effects the daily repetition (of baptism) in faith, in daily repentance and penitence, in the daily dying of the old man and the daily awakening unto new life."<sup>22</sup>

At the conversion of a baptized person in later life, the baptismal pledge is recalled. The diligent use of the means of grace is therefore the sign of continuity of postbaptismal conversion.

Ministers and Kirk Sessions in this country are often distressed and even annoyed because many "members" are never seen in church from one Communion Sunday to another. Pastors in Germany and Switzerland complain that well-attended churches are suddenly emptied as soon as the celebration of the Lord's Supper at the end of the service is announced. In both cases the unity between Word and Sacrament is broken. People who go to church only in order to keep up their church membership by handing in communion cards and those who occasionally listen to a famous preacher but refuse to communicate, receive neither the Word nor the Sacrament effectively.

In addition to the Word and Sacrament, Christian fellowship and prayer are powerful aids for the conservation of faith. To continue steadfastly in prayer is probably the hardest test for the newborn babe in Christ—and for the experienced soldier of Christ. Methods for the cultivation of the devotional life are numerous. Books on prayer and books of prayers are often recommended; some pray with the Bible and others with a crucifix before their eyes. The late Canon Lawrie of Edinburgh founded a Prayer Guild in his church which was a tremendous spiritual force, and Dr. George Macleod of the Iona Community introduced devotional report cards for the members and associates of his group. C. S. Lewis has said that he could best meditate on God by reading a tough theological book with a pencil in his hand and a pipe in his mouth. Some need companions in their prayers and others need quietness.

The importance of prayer for the continuity of the faith lies in the fact that prayers can be said everywhere and at any time. Steadfastness in prayer is a matter of the will. Christian will power is the Savior's birthday gift to those who are born again. Continuity of faith does not depend on "feeling like it," but on the will to pray. Christian prayers do not cause a man to become introspective, but prepare him for his Christian vocation in the world. Professor Hodgson of Oxford University uses a beau-

<sup>22</sup> Vogel, Heinrich, "Das Wort und die Sakramente," *Theologische Existenz heute*, Heft 35. Munich, 1936, p. 20.

tiful allegory that shows how a converted Christian is turned toward the world: "Sooner or later, if all goes rightly, God Himself will, as it were, take him gently but firmly by the shoulders and turn him round to face the world, bidding him find therein the work which is to be his service."<sup>23</sup>

But the Christian is not a solitary wanderer on the face of the earth, he faces the world in company with other Christians. He has found a spiritual home in the fellowship of the church.

The same means of grace which have proved instrumental in his conversion help him steadfastly to continue in the faith, and thus to grow in grace. One of the great masters of devotion, the Methodist Divine A. E. Witham, who combined in himself that which is best in the "Catholic" and in the "Protestant" tradition, summed up the relationship between conversion and the means of grace in these words: "We must attend the worship of His house, join in the fellowship of His people, say our daily prayers with punctual regularity, because they are the orders of the day; and the drier we are in performing these religious duties probably the better for our souls."<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Hodgson, Leonard, *Christian Faith and Practice*. Oxford, 1950, p. 104.

<sup>24</sup> Witham, A. E., *The Discipline and Culture of the Spiritual Life*. London, 1938, p. 230.

## APPENDIX

A comparison of the following passages in the Gospels and in Acts seems to reflect some definite catechetical practice in the early Church. The catechumen asks, "What shall I do?" and the catechist replies to this almost stereotyped question by pledging him to some particular task. It is interesting to notice that those who want to work are told to believe (John 6:28f.) and those who think that they have faith are told to act (Mark 10:17 and Luke 10:25ff.).

<i>Passage</i>	<i>Catechumen</i>	<i>Catechist</i>	<i>Question</i>	<i>Answer</i>
Luke 3:10f. Luke 3:12f. Luke 3:14	The people Publicans Soldiers	John the Baptist	What shall we do?	He that hath . . . let him impart Exact no more . . . Do no violence . . . be content . . .
Mark 10:17	Rich man	Jesus	What shall I do?	Sell . . . and give to the poor
Luke 10:25ff.	Lawyer	Jesus	What shall I do?	A certain Samaritan . . . do thou likewise
John 6:28f.	Galilean inquirers	Jesus	What shall we do?	Believe on him whom he hath sent
Acts 2:37	Troubled people	Peter	What shall we do?	Repent and be baptized
Acts 9:6 and Acts 22:10	Paul	Christ	What wilt thou have me to do? What shall I do?	It shall be told thee
Acts 16:30f.	Jailer	Paul and Silas	What must I do?	Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ

This practice of pledging catechumens before baptism is founded on the belief that in baptism the old man dies and a new man arises who must do what the Lord wants him to do. St. Paul probably referred to this question when he described the embarrassment of the catechist if there is no resurrection at all. Therefore he asked the Corinthians, "*What shall they do* which are baptized for the dead if the dead rise not at all?" (I Cor. 15:29) That is to say: "When the communicants ask, 'What shall we do?' what answer can we give them, if there is not such a thing as resurrection to life eternal?" These "What shall I do?" passages prove to me that the church from the beginning gave definite, compact guidance to the people in Christian faith and practice.

## Our Secularist Age

MATTHEW SPINKA

WE LIVE in an age of secularism. The popular phrase which a short time ago ran "all this and heaven too" has been revised to read "all this, period." Or to put it in another way, the deathbed remark of Henry David Thoreau made to the local minister who came to comfort him, "One world at a time, brother, one world at a time," has been revised by our pragmatic secularists to the effect that this is all the world we have. There isn't any other; let us make the best of it.

### I

This mood denotes the last stages of the era of secularist humanism in which the age has turned upon itself in a violent repudiation of its own historic character. For humanism made man the measure of all things. This humanistic phase of our western civilization is passing, as is evident in the entire culture of our day. Humanistic philosophies have become antihumanistic. The latest and most fashionable of them, the atheistic existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre, denies any ultimate meaning or significance to the universe or man. In this upsurge of nihilism the best that its prophets can do is to exhort the modern man to create for himself, as best he can, a tolerable existence out of the intolerable conditions.

In its essence this secularism is either religious indifference or practical atheism. In some instances it has reached the stage of a militant attack upon religion in either its theological or its ecclesiastical forms. But in its predominant mood it is not so much a conscious attitude or a formulated philosophy as an almost unconscious exclusion from thought or life of all religious concern. The aim of life is physical well-being or esthetic enjoyment. Along with it go immoral and amoral modes of thought or practice. All absolute standards of right and wrong are denied in favor of ethical relativism. Man is judged from a utilitarian point of view. Only in Communism has this apathetic indifferentism been organized into a code contrasting sharply with the generally recognized Christian moral order.

---

MATTHEW SPINKA, Ph.D., Th.D., D.D., is Waldo Professor of Church History at The Hartford Seminary Foundation, Hartford, Connecticut. The article above is based on an address delivered to the Conference on Secularism and Christianity (sponsored by The Methodist Church) at Columbus, Ohio, November 9, 1951.

One may observe this secularist view of life in modern literature, which on the whole denies to men and women all spiritual qualities and treats them as if they were mere biological units. Revolting indecencies are thus regarded as "local color." The overconcern with sex, with material and social conditions, predominates. Spiritual aims are rarely envisaged or are treated with ridiculously or tragically inadequate understanding. In such cases the religious analphabetism of the author is plainly revealed. A recent writer characterizes modern American literature as follows:

Nearly all the old primary assumptions which men once took for granted—the idea of one god and a very few fixed doctrines suitable for his worship, of a fixed code of sexual and social morality, of a fixed dichotomous universe divided between two irreconcilable forces of Good and Evil—have been slowly but relentlessly eroded away by the advancement of natural science, philosophy, and particularly psychiatry; or, to put it more precisely, they have been dissected and atomized until they have lost the authority of a single, integrated body of belief and been scattered into countless fragments of comfortless superstition, vague longings, and abortive guilt. The change, in short, has been from a stable and secure absolutism, in which what was possible was certain, to an unstable and insecure relativism, in which everything is possible because nothing is certain.<sup>1</sup>

Certainly our modern art, that barometer of culture, registers this antihumanist tendency with even greater clarity. It reveals, in the first place, practically total repudiation of the art of the Renaissance; and secondly, it clearly reflects the chaos, ugliness, and noise of our own decadent civilization. For, not satisfied with the denial of the spiritual nature of man, modernist art goes even beyond that and distorts in a grotesque and repelling fashion even his human form. In a revulsion against the naturalistic or humanistic forms of expression, the various schools of modernist art have either distorted or rejected natural forms altogether and substituted for them fantastic mechanical figures, such as squares, triangles, and other geometrical designs.

I need not even mention such a popular and therefore extremely influential art as that of the film screen, that chief molder of the "mass mind," and for that reason the principal means of debauching the moral standards of the populace.

This tendency to antihumanism, this denial of the spiritual nature of man, has expressed itself in the political and economic fields with particular force. In the former it has taken the form of totalitarianisms, both fascist and communist, with which we have become acquainted during the past thirty-five years. Contrary to the former emphases which dominated liberal

<sup>1</sup> Grattan, C. Hartley, "The Trouble with Books Today," *Harper's Magazine*, Nov., 1951.



democracies, all totalitarian political thinking subordinates the individual to that modern Leviathan, the state, which possesses all authority over the souls and bodies of men. It recognizes no absolute moral law to which it is willing to subject itself. The same is true of the economic order, although not to the same degree. Economic means have been substituted for human ends. Man exists for the economic order, not the economic order for man.

Totalitarianism has reached its most successful embodiment in Soviet Communism, which in its present phase of economic development is really state capitalism or state socialism. Since, contrary to the basic dogma of classical Marxism, it has everywhere seized political power as an insignificant minority, it has had to retain this power by force. For where spiritual bonds have snapped, society cannot be held together otherwise than by force. The vast mechanism of repression, which the Soviet regime has evolved during its thirty-five years of existence and which has been introduced into every satellite country, has made it a life-and-death arbiter over the destiny of the masses. As long as the state is the sole employer of its people, it can starve them into submission by the simple process of denying them an opportunity to earn a living. Any factual description of conditions in Communist-dominated countries provides ample, even horrifying, evidence and proof of this assertion. This practically unlimited power extends over the minds and souls of men as well. An utterly unscrupulous, fanatically determined loyalty to the aims of the Communist Party is demanded of all its members. The highest virtue is that of blind and unquestioning obedience. The all-dominant principle of this revolutionary morality is loyalty to the cause of the proletariat which means actually to the current policy of the Russian Politburo. Therefore disloyalty, disobedience, is the greatest sin.

Nothing, absolutely nothing, may be preferred to this supreme loyalty. There is no transcendent standard of right and wrong. That is good which aids the cause of the party; that is bad which harms it. The ultimate aim is the conquest of the world. Hence, Communism cannot tolerate any rival, whether it be God or man. Since it demands supreme loyalty to itself, it blasphemously claims for itself the divine commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." In this, as in some other aspects, Communism resembles dogmatic, intolerant religion. It is surprising in how many ways a good Communist and a good Jesuit are alike.

It follows, furthermore, that since the task of Communism is to overthrow the old order, the quicker and more effectively that is done the better. The enemies of the new order must not be allowed to defend themselves

by being given liberty of speech, press, or of other expression or conduct. "Revolutionary justice" deprives them of all property without compensation, denies them all possibility of earning a living, and thus sentences them to speedy oblivion. At any rate, the bourgeois class must be liquidated, exterminated. For no opposition is tolerated. This program is at present being put into execution in countries like Bulgaria, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and China. It had already been largely completed in the Soviet Union.

Thus force is an integral part of the program of Communism, a primary means of attaining the goal. War is an instrument of policy, not merely a means of defense. This is militant secularism in its atheistic form of a most aggressive and virulent kind.

Accordingly, a conflict with any authentically theistic religious loyalty, particularly Christian, is inevitable. The original aim of the Soviet regime, to destroy the Russian Church, was thus nearer to the real intention of the rulers than is the case at present. But even so, by making the present official Church of the Soviet Union a tool for its political aims and a subservient organ for its propaganda, the government, by granting it greater freedom, has accomplished its goal in a second-best manner. This is true of the Christian churches in the satellite countries as well. In Rumania, for instance, the present patriarch, Justinian, was a member of the Communist Party at the time of his election. Elsewhere, even where there had been an initial stage of opposition, in the end the churches have accepted their role as tools of their Communist government. The best record of opposition belongs to Roman Catholicism, which however has a political record not much better than Communism itself. Although in Bulgaria leaders of the insignificant Protestant minority put up enough opposition to earn for themselves long terms of imprisonment, elsewhere, as in Czechoslovakia, Protestant church leaders have voluntarily accepted conditions of spiritual slavery on behalf of their churches.

But it would be a mistake to restrict, even unconsciously, this reign of secularism to the so-called "Iron Curtain" countries. For it is fast becoming a world-wide phenomenon. Western liberal democracies are likewise built upon secularist presuppositions. The difference between such presuppositions of liberal democracies and of totalitarian states is one of degree, not of kind. It would be a fatal mistake to suppose that we of the West are not infected with the virus of secularism. With us the disease has not broken out in its virulent form, but the germ is in our blood.

How has this tremendous change taken place? To answer this question

would be a long story stretching over some six centuries. We would have to begin in the early times of the Renaissance when the spirit of humanism was born, the spirit of self-assertion, of this-worldliness, of scientific study of nature, of the assertion of human autonomy as against the divine Will. Much that is noble, much that is of permanent value, has been produced during those six centuries. Human liberties, rights of men, liberal constitutions guaranteeing inalienable freedoms, have been wrested from tyrannous rulers.

First of all, the new humanism asserted itself in the astonishingly powerful artistic activity such as the Western world had not witnessed since the days of Phidias and Praxiteles. Gothic cathedrals, those poems in stone, soared upward symbolizing the lofty aspirations of the men who built them. Giotto and Fra Angelico stand at the beginning of that superbly distinguished line of painters and artists who are the undying glory of our Western civilization. The same outburst of creative energy was seen in literature: in Dante, Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Cervantes. But the Renaissance had distilled poisons from its own body which in the end resulted in the writhing, agonizing throes which we are witnessing today. At first, man strove to conquer nature. In the end, nature conquered him. This naturalistic process finally threw off all religious pretense and showed itself to be lustily, robustly pagan. But even so it was still humanistic. In contrast, in our own day, this tremendous creativity both in arts and literature with which our age began is all but exhausted. For the last century and a half, creative energies have gone into natural sciences and mechanical inventions. The truly cultural or religious interests have suffered decline. We have ended with mechanistic secularism.

In the second place, the humanistic spirit of the Renaissance has shown itself in the political field, particularly in the American and French Revolutions, which represented the assertion of the autonomous, democratic man, of his right to self-government. They fought for liberty, equality, and fraternity. They repudiated the whole structure of the past along with its social theory which emanated from medieval Thomism. For the Thomistic doctrine of the relation of church and state acknowledged them as co-ordinate spheres, one having to do with the temporal, the other with the eternal concerns of men. But both were ordained of God. The magistrate, the king, and the priest were equally responsible to God. The Reformers held essentially the same view. Luther was driven by circumstances to grant the state virtual autonomy. The church was not to interfere in matters of state, and *vice versa*. Calvin, however, carefully worked out the co-

ordination between the two spheres so that the church had a voice in the concerns of the state while the state owed a duty toward the church.

However, the secularist political philosophies which succeeded the medieval systems eventuated in both the American and the French Revolutions and since then in practically every modern state—which not only separated these two spheres, the church from the state, but freed the state from any responsibility to God, deriving its power from the people and making it responsible only to the people. A modern liberal democracy no longer actually regards itself as “this nation under God.” It is freed from any recognizable responsibility to God, although the western European and American democracies recognize natural law as a moral norm. In contrast to this, totalitarianisms deny the liberal democratic concept in favor of an extreme and often militantly atheistic secularization which sees in the state the supreme power over both church and state, over both the bodies and the souls of men. Thus the initial humanistic political philosophies have ended in antihumanism.

Another dismal failure of the humanistic era is met with in modern industry. Man at first sought to conquer nature. With the coming of the machine he has succeeded in subjecting nature to himself to a degree unthinkable in any other age. Even those of us who live in relatively modest comforts afforded us by modern industry exceed in these comforts men of old who had great armies of servants at their beck and call. But man has been conquered by the machine: he has substituted economic means for spiritual ends of life. Thus the machine has done much toward destroying human personality. For modern man has been so conditioned by mass propaganda that he passively reflects the environmental influences, instead of having “a mind of his own.” Also, he has so far lost the sense of spiritual values as to be willing to surrender liberty for material security and comfort. Both free enterprise and collectivist economy have speeded up mechanization which has dehumanized life. As Berdyaev once wrote, “We are witnessing the process of dehumanization in all phases of culture and of social life. Man has ceased to be the supreme value.” Modern technical science has achieved the crowning success of the ages by unhinging the atom. Now we face the supreme danger of being destroyed by the monster our scientists have fashioned.

This, then, leads us to the consideration of scientific culture as a substitute for both the religious and humanistic world views. Scientism, a view that science does or will provide a complete and final answer to all human problems (a view widely held by positivists, whether logical or illogical),

repudiates all moral and religious sovereignty and thus becomes a totalitarianism. But these arrogant claims of positivists are fortunately no longer made by the most outstanding of the genuine scientists. Albert Einstein humbly confesses that science does not know, and never can know, what matter is; science is concerned solely with how matter behaves. Nevertheless, there is always a cultural lag among the lesser luminaries, and especially among the "scientific fellow-travelers," who extol scientism as the sole hope of the world.

To sum up, then, our conception of secularism: its chief characteristic is the claim to autonomy, to totalitarianism; politics, economy, science, technics, culture in general, all refuse to acknowledge any moral or spiritual law above them. Modern society no longer possesses a common spiritual center, does not feel bound by any law above itself. Therefore, we are confronted with the threat of atomistic disintegration and cultural self-destruction.

## II

What, then, can we of the Protestant Christian churches do in the face of this debacle of the secularist humanistic era? Let it be stated at the outset that we cannot think in terms of a return to some previous political, economic, or social order. We cannot advocate, as the Roman Catholics do, a retrogression to the imagined unities of the thirteenth century, to the mighty scholastic system of St. Thomas Aquinas. We cannot advocate even a return to our own Reformation. There have been valuable achievements of the modern age. Our task is to cherish and preserve the best which the past—both remote and immediate—has produced, but *to imbue it with a new spirit*, and consecrate it to the highest social uses. Nations, societies, cultures, economic systems, political institutions, all must become the Kingdom of our God and of his Christ.

Accordingly, I dare say, and say it deliberately, that the religious transformation of society is the chief, yea, the only hope for the future. Even a thoughtful historian like Arnold Toynbee recognizes this truth. He identifies Christians with the "creative minority" which has ever been the saving remnant of culture, and which may again become the builder of a new culture upon the ruins of the old. Authentic Christianity is already represented by a minority, even in lands traditionally designated as Christian. Therefore, even if a ruinous calamity should overtake our present civilization, it is in the Christian church that the hope of the world lies.

Accordingly, let no one be misled by appearances and conclude that totalitarian Communism represents the creative force of the future which will build a new and better world. Never! Communism represents the



destructive force of the old world, the last stage of secularism. It enslaves men to a fanatical faith in an obsolescent world view and in an inefficient economy. Hatred, brutal force, oppression, exploitation of the workers, tyranny over the body and the soul, cannot build a better world. It is an integral part of the Christian faith that evil destroys itself.

It is we of the Christian Church Universal who represent, although at present not sufficiently effectively, the constructive forces capable of building a good world. Our task is twofold: first of all, it is a long-term task of the spiritual transformation of human motivation. This is, in my judgment, the primary duty of the Christian church, particularly of its clerical members. For Christian humanism asserts that man is a microcosm comprising a spiritual as well as a physico-mental nature, and a good society can be built only by good men and women. The transformation of humankind is primarily a spiritual task, not merely an economic or political one. Only a radically transformed human will—will to common good, not will to power—can create a better society. Whatever technological, economic, political, sociological, or cultural improvements mankind may achieve, these are good only potentially; for unless they are ethically directed, they may be (and usually are) employed as improved means to unimproved ends.

Judged by these standards, the worthiness or unworthiness of a given society depends on whether it tends toward the development of human personality, or whether it uses man as a tool, as a commodity, as a thing. Is man the goal, or only a means toward some other goal, such as the building of a communist or capitalistic society? According to this criterion, a society which regards economic well-being as the highest social value—and both capitalist and communist societies do—fails to that extent of being Christian. For economy exists for man, not man for economy. "Man shall not live by bread alone."

This, then, is the long-term task of the Christian church. But if some should judge this interpretation as abstract, theoretical, lacking in practicality, I must insist that nothing but this radical spiritual change can ever accomplish the basic reform. Every social evil—injustice, war, economic exploitation, racial hatred—stems from wrong spiritual motivation. It must be eradicated before its consequences can be cured.

But that is no denial of the equally axiomatic principle that the church has a duty to engage in dealing with the immediate evils in society which call for practical action now. This short-term program, without losing sight of absolute goals, adopts practical, realistic, and effective means to deal with the immediate problems. When a house is on fire, the only responsible action is that of putting it out and saving what can be saved, instead of



preaching fire prevention. It is this realistic, short-term program in which responsible Christian laymen should be engaged to an incomparably greater degree than is now the case. For the task to be achieved requires the transformation of the very relations in which lay Christians are engaged in earning their living. Thus the absolute goal of the church does not exclude the use of other means and techniques—those of science, industry, culture, politics, agriculture—in a word, of everything that is necessary for human well-being.

Accordingly, since secularism provides the culture climate of our times, we must change that climate by changing the culture. Our task, among others, is an educational one. Our culture must once again be religion-centered. The most immediate task concerns religious education, since this is the aspect which is directly committed to the church. Our public school education in its present form is admittedly one of the chief means of secularization. The rate at which secularization proceeds is frightening. We are right in not advocating segregation such as is represented by the parochial school. But our church school program of religious education is inadequate and often ineffective. Moreover, at best it reaches only a small number of children. There are two suggestions to be made in this connection: since we believe that under the present circumstances the separation of church and state is the only possible arrangement politically, and therefore religious education cannot be integrated into the public school curriculum, should not a vigorous attempt be pressed to solve the problem on the "released-time" pattern? Or better still, should not factual religious content which naturally forms a part of our cultural heritage and pattern be integrated into the subject matter of school instruction (e.g., history)? Moreover, ought not the school, the church, and the family to be integrated more effectively in a co-operative effort to solve their common problems? And ought not Christian nurture of children to be made once more the principal duty of parents, as it has always been?

Furthermore, very much the same situation exists in our church-related colleges and universities. As President White once expressed it, the purpose of Christian education is "to interpret human life, human history, and human society in terms of their relationship to God and his will and his purposes for man."<sup>2</sup> If that is their purpose, then these institutions, by and large, fulfill it inadequately, if at all.

This then, and many similar problems, comprise the areas of practical

---

<sup>2</sup> White, G. C., "Secularism and Christian Higher Education," in Spann, *The Christian Faith and Secularism*. Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943, p. 45.

activity in which the Christian layman ought to be engaged. But he cannot perform such a function adequately and efficiently unless he is trained for it. We cannot expect appreciable results from inspirational but haphazard endeavors. Laymen in large numbers must be trained in professional or semiprofessional skills if they are to be effective. Roman Catholics provide organized guidance and training for such vocations to a much larger degree than we Protestants do. They have groups of trained leaders within organized labor. They have eight social service schools where men and women receive professional training for their work, while we hitherto have had none. No wonder that social agencies are filled with Catholic personnel! They provide schools of diplomacy. No wonder that our State Department employs Catholics in numbers very much out of proportion to their relative strength.

In short, our task is to revive and revitalize the Reformation doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, lay and clerical alike. Every vocation must be felt as being of divine calling, and as affording an opportunity, yea a duty, of bringing all things into subjection to God. We must learn anew that business, industry, politics, and every other aspect of life which today is dominated by irreligious, secularist, and even demonic forces, must be imbued with the spirit of Christ. Secularism thrives where spiritual dynamic is lacking. Only spiritually transformed men and women can provide the dynamic which will transform the world.

# The Creative Conflict

EDWIN LEWIS

## I

**M**OST CHRISTIAN PEOPLE take for granted certain things about their existence. They take God for granted. They take for granted that God is all-powerful and all-good. They take for granted that he is the Creator of the universe and of all that it contains. They believe that this is the teaching of the Bible, and they believe that it is an essential part of Christianity.

But any Christian who does a little thinking knows that this is not the whole story. He knows that there is very much in the universe that cannot be called good. He knows that the story of life on our planet is a story of incessant strife. He knows that this is true of life at every level. It does not matter how low down in the scale of life he may look, he nowhere finds peace and amity. As he ascends the scale, he finds the same characteristics. Every form of life exists at the expense of some other form. Nothing lives that does not have its enemies. The familiar line of Tennyson, "Nature red in tooth and claw," simply cannot be counted out as mere imagination. Anyone who works in a garden can see for himself the cosmic struggle in miniature. In every garden, there are the things you want, and the things you do not want. The things you do not want seem to come of themselves: they need no least encouragement. The things you want must be contended for. They are subject to all kinds of enemies—weeds, insects, grubs, parasites, and blight.

This is a miniature representation of all existence. It does not matter in which direction we look, it is always the same story. To use the technical jargon, every positive has its negative, every good has its evil. The fact of birth is answered by the fact of death. Life is prolific beyond its power to maintain what it has produced. Gentleness is answered by ferocity. Love is answered by hate. Tenderness is answered by cruelty. The beautiful is answered by the repulsive. Truth is answered by deception. Virtue is answered by vice. Health is answered by disease.

---

EDWIN LEWIS is Emeritus Professor of Systematic Theology, Drew Theological Seminary, Madison, New Jersey. This address was delivered before the Laymen's League of Christ Episcopal Church, Martinsville, Virginia, on November 10, 1950. It is reprinted here by their permission.

These contrasts could be continued almost indefinitely. They help to constitute what we know as the problem of good and evil. The problem is the more acute according as the God one believes in is more powerful and more good. The person who does not believe in God, to whom existence has no purpose or meaning, can hardly be said to have this problem. It is not that he will not use the terms right and wrong, virtue and vice, good and evil, and the like, but he will regard them as purely relative terms, and as expressing simply different aspects of the web of life. But he will not properly have a *problem* here. How can he? One thing is just as much a part of the whole as any other thing. He knows nothing of the agonizing uncertainty of the man of faith.

The man of faith does not regard the complex web of life as self-explaining. Instead, he traces it to the activity and purpose of God. He believes that the world would not be except for the will of God. When he recites his creed, he begins by saying: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth." The more convinced he is of the reality of the Creator, and of his goodness and power, the more he is conscious of the wide gap that seems to exist between the character of the creation and the character of the Creator.

## II

Men have sought in various ways to find an explanation of this situation. The one with which Christians are most familiar appears to be based on the creation narrative in Genesis. It is supposed that everything as it left the hand of God was perfectly good. This goodness applied to the first human pair. God made them in his own image. He and they were in a true fellowship with each other. The Garden of Eden was a proper place for them to live. There was no evil in the Garden, and there was no evil in the occupants. They would continue to live in the Garden just as long as they continued in perfect obedience to God and in perfect fellowship with him.

But they fell victims to pride. They were not content to live under the will of God. They resolved to go their own way, and to defy the God who made them. This defiance was sin. God at once punished their disobedience. They were driven out of the Garden. The world became a place of difficulty. Labor and pain, disease and death, became their lot, and it has remained the lot of their descendants ever since. We do not hear it said so often now, but at one time it was common for Christian men to believe that it was the Bible teaching that the entire aspect of nature was

changed by human sin. Sin was held to be the cause of all the evil of the world—as much of earthquakes and tidal waves as of pain and disease and death.

A modification of this view is to the effect that God created the world as it is because it was his purpose to make man a free creature, and a free creature could be brought to moral perfection only by a course of rigid discipline. The moral disciplining of man is therefore the reason for the world being as it is. It is this way, not as punishment for the sin of the first man, but to train men in the ways of holiness. So while the world may be said to be the way it is on account of man, it is on man's account only because in no other kind of world could God's purpose with him be fulfilled.

We can readily agree that there is a profound relation between the life of man and the life of the world, but we can hardly help observing the vast inequalities in the experiences that befall mankind. For some people, life seems to be, as we say, a primrose path. For other people, it is a long road of thorns and thistles. We shall not deny the necessity of human discipline; we shall only say that some lives seem to be disciplined far beyond anything that the situation seems to call for, and that for others life moves along on an even keel—no physical afflictions, no bitter losses, no heart-breaking disappointments, no sudden devastating tragedies. If the only consideration is that of bringing free human spirits, by the discipline exercised by a world like this, into submission to the will of God, then it would seem to us that in some cases the discipline is far in excess of what is needed, and that in other cases it is far too little.

### III

Perhaps we should find some help if we were to examine more carefully the creation narrative in Genesis. Most people suppose that the narrative teaches that creation was, as the saying goes, *ex nihilo*—out of nothing. But there is a very grave question about this. The first sentence reads, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." But that is what might be called a topic sentence. It is customary for writers first to state a proposition, and then to elaborate it. The first sentence of the Bible is like that. If we add a few words, the procedure is made quite clear. Thus: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and this is the way in which he did it." The writer then goes on to describe the process.

Note what he says: "The earth was waste and void, and darkness was

upon the face of the abyss." It is a reasonable supposition that the writer of the narrative means to say that this was what God had to start with. He did not start with nothing. He started with what may properly be called a great confusion, a wild and untamed chaos. Then the Spirit of God "moved" across this great confusion. The Hebrew word could be rendered "brooded." The Divine Spirit brooded over the chaos, and under that brooding influence order began to appear. We do not need to be concerned with the various steps which the order followed, beyond noting that the crown of the process was the appearing of man. The implication is that the purpose of the creation was to be the home of man; that man held a relation to God not held by any other creature; and therefore that God's chief concern was with man and what he might become.

In all this, it is implied that God had something to begin with. The Hebrew word which we render "create" does not strictly mean "producing something out of nothing." It means rather "shaping," "forming," or "moulding." What we might call "the makings" of creation were always there—eternal, uncreated, indestructible. But these "makings" were quite impotent in themselves. "Disorder" could never become "order" of itself. A new factor must be introduced. The writer of Genesis calls this new factor "the Spirit of God." It was when God began to work on disorder that signs of order began to appear. God insinuated himself into the confusion. His work bore upon it his own signature. The final touch was that point where he introduced most of himself. That point was man, because of man it is said that God made him "in his own image, after his own likeness." Not only so, but the purpose of the making was that between the Creator and his creature man there might be unbroken fellowship.

It is at this point that the writer of the narrative introduces another factor. He calls it "the serpent." We do not need to be too literal here. The serpent is evidently a symbol. Of what? Of something that stands in complete contradiction to God and his purpose. God did not create the serpent. The serpent is an intruder. The serpent is not of God's will, but *in spite* of his will. The serpent is the symbol of that chaos and confusion which confronted God in the beginning. The presence of the serpent means that God had not been able to bring the chaos under his complete control. In a word, the serpent means that God has an Enemy, and that this Enemy will always be seeking to frustrate the will and purposes of God.

This gives rise to a natural question. It is the question, "Where did the serpent come from?" In later Hebrew, Jewish, and Christian thought, the serpent is identified with Satan, the devil, Apollyon, Abaddon, and the



like. For reasons we do not need to consider, it came to be supposed that this Satan was "a fallen angel." He had been driven out of heaven because he had become a victim of pride and led a rebellion against God himself. He failed in his purpose, but in his fallen estate he still continued to employ his power to bring to failure the purposes of God.

This is probably an effort to do two things. It is an effort, first, to free God of all responsibility for the evils of the world. It is an effort, second, to explain the evil of this world by tracing it to evil in another world. We can appreciate the first motive; the second motive only succeeds in pushing the problem a little farther away. It still leaves us with the fact that God has an Enemy, and consequently with the fact that whatever God does his Enemy will appear and seek to undo it.

For those who may be interested in the question in its ultimate reference, this proposal may be suggested. The question, Where did the serpent come from? is of a piece with the question, Where did God come from? and Where did the "stuff," "the makings," of creation come from? God did not come from anywhere. The "stuff" did not come from anywhere. What is represented by the serpent did not come from anywhere. That is to say, there is here no question of origin, no question of a beginning. Existence is eternal, and it is compacted of three utterly distinct elements. One of these elements we may call the divine; another we may call the demonic; the third we may call the neutral. Of these three, it belongs only to the divine to create. It belongs to the neutral to provide the field in which the creative power may function. It belongs to the demonic to hinder the activity of the creative power.

Hence we have three categories: creativity, noncreativity, discreativity. That is to say, there is an eternal form of existence to which it belongs to create. There is an eternal form of existence to which it belongs to be the material through which the creative power can work. And there is an eternal form of existence to which it belongs to destroy that which is being created. Neither of these three ever began to be. All of these three are at this moment at work. Neither of these three will ever cease to be. We meet all three of them in the creation narrative in Genesis. There is the raw material which the narrative calls the void or the abyss—chaos. There is the God who begins to work with this material, to shape it, to form it, and to subdue it to his purposes. And there is the demonic power which can never create anything, but can only attempt to destroy that which is being created. (See the author's volume, *The Creator and the Adversary*, Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943.)

## IV

Chaos, God, the Serpent—or, if you like, the noncreative, the creative, the discreative—these are the primal elements of the creative conflict. These explain why the world is as it is. These are present in every part of the creation at this very moment. Wherever we look, we see two powers at work—the constructive and the destructive. At every point where the creative is active, the discreative is active as well. We see it in the inorganic. We see it in the organic. We see it in plant life. We see it in insect life, in bird life, in animal life, in human life. We see it in all the works of men. God never sleeps, and his enemy never sleeps. The tendency of everything is to return to that from which it was made. All forms, from the lowest to the highest, come and go, but that of which they are the forms remain, yesterday, today, and forever.

Did the Creator know that this is the way it would be? It is the teaching of the Bible that he did. The Bible represents God as having a purpose, and reaching a decision. The course of nature and of history springs from a resolution, so to speak, on God's part. If the expression may be permitted, God must have been tempted not to do anything. So long as he did not do anything, his Enemy could not do anything. He knew that the Enemy was there—dark, insensate, demonic, malign, but utterly helpless. The Enemy could not destroy until there was something to destroy, and whether or not there was something to destroy depended on God. If God did not make anything, the evil power could not unmake it.

We call this God's dilemma—God's tragic dilemma. God is Holy Love at the point of absolute perfection. It is the very nature of holy love to desire the increase of holy love. But there is only one way in which holy love can be increased, and that is by the production of beings who are themselves able to come to holy love. These beings will necessarily have to be made in the image of God, because only beings who have some resemblance to God's nature to begin with can approximate that holy love which is God's deepest quality. But it was absolutely certain that the very means by which God sought to secure such beings would provide his enemy with a point of attack.

God is not the Creator of evil, because God is Holy Love, and holy love is in opposition to all evil. But evil appears wherever holy love becomes creative. The price of good is evil, either as actuality or as possibility. We see this at every turn. The higher the good that is secured, the greater is the evil that it makes possible. Where can you suffer most? At the point where you love the most. Parenthood carries with it the greatest

joy of which human beings are capable, but it carries with it the greatest possible grief and sorrow. You know as certainly as you know anything that when you find yourself bound to another in the chains of love, the day will come when because of that love your heart will break. You know as well as you know anything that the freedom which is your most precious endowment will lead you into sin; it will cause you to make all sorts of tragic mistakes; in the larger areas of life, it will set nation against nation, and lead to destructive wars. There can be no good thing which may not be the reason for evil. This is not so because of the will of God. It is so because of the very nature of existence. God does not determine the nature of existence, just because the nature of existence includes God himself, sets bounds to his activities, and determines by what processes he will realize his purposes.

This does not mean that God is not free to act. He is free to act or not to act. That is to say, he is free to create or not to create. But just because the nature of existence is as it is, it will follow that if God exercises his creative right, there will appear in his creation much that he does not intend, much that he does not approve, and much that he will seek to destroy.

It is this that brings us squarely before the fact that creativity means conflict, and that there cannot be creativity on any other condition. We may balk at this fact all we like. We may try to evade it in all sorts of devious ways. We may try to do as Augustine and Calvin did, and trace the tragic character of our world not to some necessity which even God must recognize, but to the first sinful act of the first human pair. This so-called solution of the problem has become less acceptable according as we have learned more about the process of creation. We know now that there were pain and suffering, conflict and death, evil in a thousand forms, long before the appearance of man. There was never a time when perfectly innocent human beings lived in a Garden of Eden. The belief that there was such a time represents a yearning for the ideal, not a sober historical fact.

We see today that the Garden of Eden story must be treated as a *mythus*. A *mythus* is not mere fancifulness. It is a form in which a great truth is expressed, although the form itself is fictitious. A *mythus* is not to be taken just as it stands, because if it is taken just as it stands it is misleading. A *mythus* needs to be "interpreted" just as a piece of music or a work of art needs to be "interpreted." One thing is being said, but another thing is intended. It is the "intent" of the Eden *mythus* that we need to apprehend. The intent is to suggest what God wanted: what he got was

different. The ideal is one thing; the sober historical reality is another. The Eden narrative puts at the beginning of the creative adventure what can actually be achieved only through great tribulation. It is as though the goal is pushed back to the starting-point. It is "pushed back" so that we may see what God is "after." It is a suggestive fact that if we turn to the Book of Revelation, which describes the climax of the creative and redemptive conflict, this is exactly what we find. In 22:1-5 we have, as it were, the Garden of Eden as realized actuality. The Genesis narrative brings before us the character of conditions through which the divine intent must be brought to fulfillment.

## V

It is not only a question of sin, but of evil as well. Not only is there much evil that cannot be traced to sin, but evil itself is a broader category than sin. We embrace "sin" under "evil" rather than "evil" under "sin." Evil is universal in a sense in which sin is not. Sin is limited to human persons; evil is found wherever there is life; and even where there is no life, evil may be said to be operative. Forms of evil may be said to exist even where the foot of man has never trod. All the time in the heart of the jungle and in the depths of the sea, the creative conflict is going on; the stronger are preying on the weaker; monstrosities crawl or swim about which seem to indicate the possibility that the life stream could issue at last in one vast abnormality, just as human knowledge might issue in the discovery of a secret whose use could destroy the entire human race.

We gain nothing by closing our eyes to the facts which confront us on every hand. We gain nothing by being cheap optimists, or cheap romanticists, or cheap sentimentalists. The least we can do is to be realistic. The least we can do is to recognize that divine creativity is not a pleasant pastime for God, but a vast adventure into the unknown and the unknowable. It is an adventure in which the good that God seeks may be overcome by the evil which the very adventure makes possible. It is an adventure whose outcome calls on the part of God for a great faith. Creation is not a mathematical formula which God has already worked out from beginning to end with absolute exactitude, so that there will never be any novelties, any contingencies, any unanticipated turn in the flow of events. Some philosophers have so understood creation, but this is not what we actually observe, and this is not what the Bible presents us with.

This is not to deny that there are aspects of creation where the mathematical prevails. Plato uttered a profound truth when he said, "God geometrizes," just as Eddington did in our own time when he said, "God is

a great mathematician." But there are aspects of creation which are non-mathematical, therefore nonpredictable. The moment that conscious life appears, there appears also the principle of variation. Free decisions become possible, and with them uncertainties, frustrations, tragedies.

In the Bible view, creation itself expresses a divine decision. God made a deliberate choice. He assumed the responsibility of being the Creator of such a world as we see this world to be. A God of holiness accepted the certainty of evil. A God of love accepted the certainty of hate. A God whose normal mode of existence was a Triune Fellowship of perfect and unhindered bliss accepted the disruption of his bliss, put himself under the law of sacrifice, and laid himself open to the dark designs of his malignant Enemy. This is what God did. This is why John speaks of a Lamb as it were slain from the foundations of the world. This is why the God of the Bible can never be identified with the Unmoved Mover of Aristotle, the Absolute One of Plotinus, the Pure Being of Thomas Aquinas, the Universal Totality of Spinoza, or the Absolute Idea of Hegel.

The God of the Bible is a God of decisions. He is a God of action. He is a God who enters into covenants. He is a God who submits himself to the unexpected. In a word, he is a God who is not content to remain aloof, a spectator in the balcony, but a God who throws himself into the arena, a participant in the conflict, a God who gives all that he has for the cause to which he is committed. He knows that his cause may fail, but he has faith that it will not.

The Bible is the story of that divine participation in its most dramatic form. God's participation is not limited to what the Bible portrays, but the portrayal there may be taken as a presentation of the divine intent. Nowhere else is God set forth as he is in the Bible. The God of the Bible can be defied; he can be sinned against; he can be frustrated. The God of the Bible is aware of an Enemy. Again and again his Enemy triumphs over him. The God of the Bible maintains the very conditions in which he must wage his warfare. He lays himself on the altar of his own vast creative enterprise. And all this because he knows that all that he is contending for is worth all that it costs. He knows the pains, the sorrows, the bitternesses, the animosities, the countless tragedies that comprise the story. He not only knows them, but he enters into them. In one great flash of insight a Hebrew prophet could write: "In all our afflictions he is afflicted."

## VI

This at once requires that we distinguish between what God wills and



what he does not will. This distinction is fundamental in the Christian view. God does not "will" that the life of your little child should be crushed out by a drunken driver! But if such a tragedy should occur, then you are right in enquiring what the will of God may be for you *in this heart-breaking situation*. His will is that you should triumph over this evil. He is "afflicted" in your "affliction," but he would transmute the loss into gain. He would have you subdue the Enemy just as he would himself. His real "will" is that you "stand fast."

And at one point he enters the conflict to the uttermost possible extent that his own nature permits. It is the point at which he most exposes himself to the onslaught of his Enemy. He enters the conflict in the person of his own Eternal Son. This is what the Christian calls the Incarnation. The Enemy gives all that he has to frustrate the purposes of the Creative God. The Creative God gives all that he has to bring to nought the dark designs of his Enemy. But the Creative God can do something the Enemy cannot do. He can give something the Enemy cannot give. He can give out of his own very being the Son of his Love. It was because he knew that he had that to give that God entered upon his great adventure.

*The postulate of the creative conflict is the Trinity.* The way God is intrinsically constituted is determinative of the creative and redemptive procedure. He had within himself a resource to which he would trust to turn the scales. He had as a part of his very being the Eternal Son—"the Word." In the Incarnation, that is, in the appearing of the Eternal Son "in the flesh" as Jesus Christ, God would both expose himself to his Enemy's cruellest blow and achieve his own greatest victory. Calvary was that cruellest blow. There hate and love met in one final grapple, and the victory went to hate. Why could that be? Because love would rather consent to be conquered than to cease to be love. The Son of God yielded to the power of evil, because death always means that the destructive (discreative) principle has prevailed. But it was a free yielding. We are not to forget Jesus' own words to his disciples at the time of the arrest: "Know ye not that I could ask of my Father, and he would send me twelve legions of angels?" But he did not ask. Instead, "he drank the cup to the last bitter dregs," and bowed his head, and died. So the Enemy rolled the stone before the door of the tomb, and made it fast, and rejoiced that his triumph was complete.

But the Enemy was mistaken. The Enemy did not know that the Incarnate Son of God, in yielding to death as the ultimate expression of the principle of discreativity, had attained unto what in the Fourth Gospel is



called "eternal life." This "eternal life" is to be defined as life beyond the power of the Enemy to hurt or to destroy. It is eternal life that God set out to make possible for mankind, but it could come only by way of great tribulation. In Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God entered our human flesh in order to experience our human lot, including death, and then to vanquish death by securing for mankind eternal life. *The Resurrection is the revelation of the reality of that eternal life.* In his victory is the pledge of ours. "Because I live, ye shall live also."

## VII

We look out over the universal struggle of life and death, and again and again we would turn our face away. We look at our own lives, and we know how shameful they have been and are. We look at the contemporary world, torn asunder by rivalries of titanic proportions. Is it worth while? we ask. Would not the Creator God better pass a miracle, blot out the universe, and write "Finis" to his tragic adventure? And the answer is "No."

It is "No," for one reason, and that reason is Jesus Christ. For when we despair of the world, we are bidden to remember that this is the world into which Jesus Christ came from the Father. It is the world in which he lived and loved. It is the world for which he died. It is the world in which the Creative God accomplished the miracle of his Resurrection. Even God could not bring his creature man to eternal life—life that evil could not destroy—save by the long and bitter pathway of creative conflict. Nor could he do it even by that pathway unless he personally entered the conflict on the same conditions as his creature man. He had confidence that by making the supreme sacrifice of which he was capable, victory would be possible.

This is what the Bible is all about—creation, revelation, incarnation, human participation, consummation. The Enemy is a vast demonic reality, but over against the demonic we may set (1) the Creative God of Holy Love; (2) the Eternal Son who met the enemy in our human flesh and prevailed; and (3) the man of faith who commits himself to God's purpose in Christ.

## W. Somerset Maugham and the Christian Preacher

JOHN J. BUNTING, JR.

THE TITLE of this essay probably comes as a surprise to the reader—at least to the reader who knows anything of W. Somerset Maugham and of the function of the Christian preacher. A strong argument might be presented to show that there is little connection between the two. It is true that Maugham has not been a writer of Christian convictions, nor is he a man of Christian convictions. This is obvious in his fictional writings—both by implication and by direct statement. And it comes to sharp focus in his autobiographical work, *The Summing Up*.

In discussing man's quest for meaning in life, Maugham declares: "He lives not by truth but by make-believe, and his idealism, it has sometimes seemed to me, is merely his effort to attach the prestige of truth to the fictions he has invented to satisfy his self-conceit."<sup>1</sup>

This frank disavowal by Maugham of any firm basis of faith such as that on which the Christian depends makes his position clear as far as the realm of religious belief is concerned.

Concerning the validity of the moral law or any particular need for a moral code, the following statement provides the basic philosophy upon which much of Maugham's writing is apparently founded:

I take the goodness of the good for granted and I am amused when I discover their defects or their vices; I am touched when I see the goodness of the wicked and I am willing enough to shrug a tolerant shoulder at their wickedness. . . . My observation has led me to believe that, all in all, there is not so much difference between the good and the bad as the moralists would have us believe.<sup>2</sup>

A long list of Maugham's writings might be drawn up, showing wherein the point of view expressed in the above quotation is reflected in the plots and characters of his many stories. Among them sex is found

<sup>1</sup> Maugham, W. S., *The Summing Up*. From *The Maugham Reader*, Doubleday & Company, p. 673.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 515.

---

JOHN J. BUNTING, JR., B.D., Ph.D., is Minister of the Newark Methodist Church, Newark, Delaware, and Director of the Wesley Foundation at the University of Delaware. Permission has been given by A. P. Watt & Son, London, agents for Mr. Maugham, for the quotations here used.

in a dominant role (as in *The Painted Veil*, *Our Betters*, *Rain*, and many others); the moral law frequently fares the worse for the writing (as in one story from *Ah King!* which tells of a criminal who escaped all the dire consequences of his crime); ingratitude of the basest sort parades across the pages (as in *The Hour Before the Dawn*); and a dark, forbidding fatalism often appears (as in *The Explorer*, the story of a young woman named Lucy who is swept relentlessly before the tide of a weakness which has previously wrecked her father and her brother).

### I. A WIDESPREAD POINT OF VIEW

In these two areas, therefore, W. Somerset Maugham and the Christian preacher seem to be separated by a wide gulf. But herein lies precisely the first point of our consideration. There is no writer or position which ought to be beyond the consideration of the Christian thinker or preacher. Furthermore, when the position held is one apparently shared by millions of others, the Christian preacher needs to examine it carefully for what it may teach him about the contemporary scene and for the challenge which it may offer his own instruments of Christian presentation.

Glenway Westcott, in the Introduction to *The Summing Up*, makes the following statement:

. . . he (Maugham) is the one, the only one, who for more than a quarter of a century has had the admiration of an elite of highly cultivated, sophisticated readers and of a sufficient number of good fellow writers, with increasing influence on the younger ones; and at the same time has given great pleasure to, made sense to, and affected the lives of, a million or more ordinary mortals.<sup>3</sup>

On the basis of this statement (which, in terms of Maugham's popularity, is entirely correct), it is important for the Christian preacher to remember the significant fact that the philosophy and attitudes reflected in Maugham's writings are also the attitudes of large numbers of people in our world today. It is this viewpoint with which the Christian minister must in many instances deal from the pulpit on Sunday and face during his pastoral work from week to week. It is not always expressed. It often remains implicit rather than explicit; but it is there nevertheless, undercutting the foundations of the soul, robbing life of its rightful vigor, or (in some instances) infusing impurity where purity should prevail.

It is in this area that Dr. Lynn Harold Hough distinguishes between the portrayal of evil employed by Aristophanes and that employed by Maugham.

<sup>3</sup> Westcott, G., "An Introduction to Maugham." From *The Maugham Reader*, p. vii.

There is never in Aristophanes the sophisticated cult of the unclean which appears in many modern writers. There are urbane passages of subtle viciousness in the writings of W. Somerset Maugham or Logan Pearsall Smith which would have made Aristophanes very angry. There is in Aristophanes the honesty of the barnyard but never the inverted sacrament of brutal sensuality such as appeared in particularly corrupt perversion in the catacombs of Paris.<sup>4</sup>

Evil as presented by Maugham is thus attired in sophisticated garb, as it surely is in our day in so many instances. It has become, as Dr. Hough says, a kind of "inverted sacrament." Of these currents the Christian preacher must be aware. Maugham, like few other novelists, has crystallized this particular subhuman approach to life, placing it like a cheap stone in the lovely velvet of an urbane setting.

To have some acquaintance with the mind of Maugham is therefore also to gain some insight into the point of view toward life held by many modern minds. And although the knowledge gained is often unpleasant and discouraging, it is knowledge which the minister must have if he is to be in realistic touch with the thought-currents of the day in which he lives.

## II. THE ROOTS OF MAUGHAM'S RELIGIOUS SKEPTICISM

From the point of view of the Christian minister, perhaps the most interesting aspect of the skepticism of W. Somerset Maugham is the sequence of events in his early life which apparently had much to do with his cynicism toward religion, his anticlericalism, and his basic questioning of the validity of an established moral code.

Maugham's greatest novel, *Of Human Bondage*, is essentially autobiographical in its content, telling of a young doctor's early life from infancy to young manhood, and laying bare with great forcefulness the bitterness he feels toward the clergyman-uncle in whose home he lives after the death of his mother. The early pages of the novel are spotted with rather devastating references to the clergy, and the picture painted of the uncle is uncomplimentary in all respects—personal, intellectual, and ministerial.

The hero of the novel, the young doctor Philip Carey, struggles with the handicap of a clubfoot, which brings him great bitterness—as a child and later as a young man. The parallel handicap in Maugham's own life was stammering. In *The Summing Up* he speaks of how the clergymen-masters at the King's School were impatient of his stammering, and continues, "if they did not ignore me completely, which I preferred, they bullied me. They seemed to think it was my fault that I stammered."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Hough, L. H., *The Meaning of Human Experience*. The Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1945, p. 217.

<sup>5</sup> *The Summing Up*, op. cit., pp. 640-641.

In speaking of his uncle, he writes: ". . . I discovered that my uncle was a selfish man who cared for nothing but his own comfort."<sup>6</sup> The neighboring clergy are treated no more gently, as the following quotation indicates:

One of them was fined in the county court for starving his cows; another had to resign his living because he was convicted of drunkenness. I was taught that we lived in the presence of God and that the chief business of man was to save his soul. I could not help seeing that none of these clergymen practiced what they preached.<sup>7</sup>

Maugham builds a chapter in *Of Human Bondage* upon an incident in his childhood which seems to have been the key event in alienating him from the church and its faith. Having been assured by his uncle that prayer could literally move mountains and accomplish similar miracles, he prayed one night that God would take away his speech impediment. (In *Of Human Bondage* Philip Carey prays that his clubfoot will have disappeared the next morning.) He writes of the result, "I woke full of exultation and it was a real, a terrible shock, when I discovered that I stammered as badly as ever."<sup>8</sup> A Christian educator interested in the correct conception of prayer for the growing child could hardly find a more vivid illustration than this of the *wrong* method in teaching a child the efficacy of prayer.

Maugham goes on to tell of the intolerant position held by his uncle toward Roman Catholics and toward the dissenters in his parish. "Heaven," the uncle believed, "was reserved for the members of the Church of England."<sup>9</sup> When young Somerset went to Germany he was surprised that the Germans were just as proud of being Germans as he was proud of being English. He also observed that the students at High Mass in Heidelberg worshiped devoutly and seemed to believe in their religion as sincerely as he believed in his. This came as a shock to the young mind of Maugham, tutored as he had been in his uncle's school of narrow dogmatism, and it struck him that he might very well have been born in South Germany, and brought up as a Catholic.

The process in Maugham's thinking and emotional reaction from this point was quite rapid and very sweeping. He writes as follows:

The next step was easy; I came to the conclusion that it could not matter a row of pins what one believed; God could not condemn people just because they were Spaniards or Hottentots. I might have stopped there and if I had been less ignorant

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 641.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 641.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 640.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 641.

adopted some form of deism like that which was current in the eighteenth century. But the beliefs that had been instilled into me hung together and when one of them came to seem outrageous the others participated in its fate. The whole horrible structure, based not on the love of God but on the fear of Hell, tumbled down like a house of cards.<sup>10</sup>

The last sentence in the quotation would seem to classify Maugham among the many people who have reacted vigorously to an encrusted Calvinism, which dwelt long and loud upon God's implacable wrath but had little to say of his redemptive and compassionate love.

The logic of Maugham at that time was, of course, incorrect. We cannot judge the whole by its parts or an entire church by a few representatives. But our reactions in childhood are largely emotional rather than logical, and impressions made at that time leave an indelible mark. To know these facts is to see W. Somerset Maugham in a different light and to evaluate him from a different perspective. This certainly is not to imply for a moment that we disagree any less vigorously with the picture he often paints of life, but it is of significance to know the factors in his early life which by his own testimony moved him in a direction opposite to that of the Christian believer.

Here, then, is a good object lesson in the realm of early impressions, the need for transmitting our faith in a sane and appropriate fashion, and the importance of words and deeds having a reasonable consistency. Though speculation in the realm of "might-have-been" is vain, it is tantalizing to the imagination to wonder for a moment what a different influence might have been exerted by this dean of English novelists, this brilliant storyteller, if the early influences in his life had been favorable rather than prejudicial to the value and significance of the Christian faith for human life.

### III. MAUGHAM'S SURPRISING INSIGHTS

In addition to his point of view being widespread enough to command attention, and the roots of his religious skepticism being of special interest to the Christian minister, the third reason for a consideration of Maugham is found in the surprising insights which may occasionally be discovered in his writings. This assertion may appear somewhat contradictory to some of the statements already made concerning Maugham; but the insights inevitably derive from a writer who disavows any particular philosophy of life, and builds each plot as its events unfold from the flow of his mind and pen. The following references may serve to indicate that at times

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 642.



the portrayals of Maugham come surprisingly close to what we think of as Christian insights, and can even be used for illustrative purposes.

A. *Insight concerning man.* Maugham is brilliant at times in laying bare *man's inherent weakness*, and provides those who propound the doctrine of original sin with some graphic instances. Perhaps the most dramatic is the character Dora Friedberg in *The Hour Before the Dawn*. Dora is an Austrian refugee who during World War II is befriended and provided a home by the Hendersons, a wealthy English family. She presumably falls in love with and marries Jim, the son. She repays the kindness of the family and her husband's love by giving the Germans a clue to the location of a strategic airport nearby so that it can be destroyed. In a dramatic scene at the close of the book, when faced with evidence of her deed, she flings her hatred and contempt at her husband, who in rage and frustration strangles her to death.

One can look for a long time to find a more vivid dramatization of the persistence of evil within a human personality than this one. One can readily appreciate Maugham's comment in writing of his loss of belief in God:

With my mind at all events I ceased to believe in God; I felt the exhilaration of a new freedom. But we do not believe only with our minds; in some deep recess of my soul there lingered still the old dread of hell-fire, and for long my exultation was tempered by the shadow of that ancestral anxiety. I no longer believed in God; I still, in my bones, believed in the Devil.<sup>11</sup>

Another character paralleling Dora Friedberg in human waywardness is Charles Strickland in the novel, *The Moon and Sixpence*. Strickland abruptly leaves his family and his society, living for the rest of his life in a state of immorality and irresponsibility upon a Pacific isle. In a review of this novel, Maxwell Anderson is driven to say, "Human nature is, at bottom, never any better than Strickland, and frequently far worse, from a moralist's point of view."<sup>12</sup>

Not only does Maugham provide us with material concerning man's inherent weakness; he is also aware of *man's heroic quality*. The heroism of Philip Carey in *Of Human Bondage*, as he struggles against great odds for love and security, is strong in its appeal. In *The Razor's Edge*, that novel in which religion occupies a larger place than in any of Maugham's stories, the insistent quest of Larry, the hero, for religious satisfaction is heroic in the sacrifices which are involved. Several other instances might

<sup>11</sup> *The Summing Up*, op. cit., p. 642.

<sup>12</sup> Maxwell Anderson, "In Vishnu-Land What Ávatar?" *Dial*, November 29, 1919, p. 478.

be cited wherein Maugham, fully aware of man's proneness to evil, portrays flashes of brilliant heroism in the characters which he presents.

It is in both of these traits of man—inherent weakness and surprising heroism—that the Christian believes. They make for a balanced and sane theology of man. The writings of Maugham include a recognition of both.

B. *Insight concerning society.* In addition to this degree of insight into the character of man, in an entirely different area, the sociological and political, Maugham must be given credit for a wisdom and insight which perhaps has not had sufficient recognition. In the novel *Christmas Holiday* he reveals this area of his interest. It is the story of an English youngster from a well-to-do family holidaying in Paris, when he encounters and makes friends with a pathetic Russian-refugee prostitute, who confesses her identity (she is the wife of a notorious murderer) and tells him the story of her checkered career.

Glenway Westcott offers high praise in his discussion of this novel:

Maugham in this slight volume, less than a hundred thousand words long, with his air of having nothing on his mind except his little characters . . . explains more of the human basis of fascism and nazism and communism than anyone else has done; the self-fascinated, intoxicated, insensible character of all that new leadership in Europe; the womanish passivity of the unhappy masses dependent on it and devoted to it; the Anglo-Saxon bewilderment in the matter, which still generally prevails; and the seeds of historic evil yet to come, not at all extirpated in World War II, but rather fortified and multiplied, and flung with greater profusion in no less receptive soil farther afield, even beyond Europe.<sup>13</sup>

It is at the end of the novel, after the young man Charley Mason has returned to his English estate, and as he ponders his contact with the Russian girl whose life in Europe has been so different from his own sheltered life, that Maugham makes this statement of his hero: ". . . only one thing had happened to him, it was rather curious when you came to think of it, and he didn't just then quite know what to do about it: the bottom had fallen out of his world."<sup>14</sup> One can hardly think of words more appropriate to the events of our generation and their impact upon many than these, "The bottom has fallen out of our world."

In the book *Strictly Personal*, written by Maugham in 1941 as a commentary on personal experiences incident to the beginning of World War II, he reveals further social insight—both in his observations of the situation then and his prophecies of postwar developments. He discusses the condition of the working man in France before the war and the indif-

<sup>13</sup> Westcott, G., *op cit.*, p. xx.

<sup>14</sup> Maugham, W. S., *Christmas Holiday*, *op. cit.*, p. 314.

ference of the rich toward their need. While observing a Communist rally with a French banker friend, Maugham comments on the Communist motto, "Peace, Work, Well-being," and asks the banker his reaction to it. His reply is, "Peace certainly, work of course; but well-being, no—that's out of the question. They can't expect that."<sup>15</sup> The well-to-do, says Maugham, were haunted by the fear of bolshevism, and preferred Hitler to the possibility of Communism stripping them of their wealth.

Maugham is also very much interested in the social needs of his native England, and displays accurate insight concerning several of the nation's problems. He says, for example, of the public schools, "They can only survive if they become once more what they were founded to be, public schools in which rich (such rich as there are) and poor can share the same education."<sup>16</sup> And he declares, "The class consciousness which is the great obstacle in the way of mutual comprehension must surely disappear."<sup>17</sup>

The prophecy which Maugham made in 1941 concerning England after the war has been vindicated. He quotes an English leader who predicted that England would be "a country where there's work for all, and no very rich people and no very poor people."<sup>18</sup> Maugham partially agrees with this prediction, adding his own comment that "we shall all be very poor" and there shall be "long hours of work"<sup>19</sup> for all. He also predicted that labor would introduce measures transferring the prime necessities of life from private to state ownership. In these and similar prophecies concerning what he calls a "revolution by consent" in England, Maugham has proven to be a well-informed and capable social prophet.

C. *Insight concerning suffering.* Those who are theologically inclined and interested especially in the problem of suffering and its relation to the existence and personality of God will be interested in Maugham's view of the problem. In *The Summing Up* he grapples with the problem in a forthright fashion. He displays in the discussion a knowledge of philosophy and even theology which belies any preconceived notion of him as a superficial thinker or one not in touch with the deeper thought-currents of intellectual life.

He begins the discussion by declaring that "the most urgent problem that confronts the plain man is the problem of evil."<sup>20</sup> He refers to

<sup>15</sup> Maugham, W. S., *Strictly Personal*, op. cit., p. 206.

<sup>16</sup> *Strictly Personal*, op. cit., pp. 264-265.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 259.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 259.

<sup>20</sup> *The Summing Up*, op. cit., p. 650.

Bradley's treatment of the subject in *Appearance and Reality*, and summarizes Bradley's position as follows:

It is appallingly gentlemanlike. It leaves you with the impression that it is really rather bad form to attach any great importance to evil, and though its existence must be admitted it is unreasonable to make a fuss about it. In any case it is much exaggerated and it is evident that there is a lot of good in it. . . . The Absolute is the richer for every discord and for all diversity which it embraces.<sup>21</sup>

Maugham refers to other variations upon this basic point of view, namely, that suffering has moral value. Drawing upon his experience as an interne (working in the worst slums of London), he hits hard this particular interpretation. He comments concerning it, "Several books on these lines had a great success and their authors, who lived in comfortable homes, had three meals a day and were in robust health, gained much reputation."<sup>22</sup> He then offers his own view of the subject:

I set down in my notebook, not once or twice, but in a dozen places, the facts that I had seen. I knew that suffering did not ennoble; it degraded. It made men selfish, mean, petty, and suspicious. It absorbed them in small things. It did not make them more than men; it made them less than men. . . .<sup>23</sup>

In attempting to find an answer to the problem, Maugham says that he finds only one explanation that appeals equally to his sensibility and his imagination. That is the doctrine of the transmigration of souls.

It would be less difficult to bear the evils of one's own life if one could think that they were but the necessary outcome of one's errors in a previous existence, and the effort to do better would be less difficult too when there was the hope that in another existence greater happiness would reward one.<sup>24</sup>

Thus Maugham, in seeking to find a solution to this age-old problem, leans upon the theory of moral retribution and reward as extended from one life to the next, which is essentially the meaning of transmigration.

He is also aware of the implications of evil for the existence, omnipotence, and goodness of God. ". . . the evil of the world then forces on us the conclusion that this being cannot be all-powerful and all-good."<sup>25</sup> He is willing to accept the possibility of God not being all-powerful, but rebels against the supposition of a God who is not all-good. He therefore concludes, "We are forced then to accept the supposition of a God who is not all-powerful. . . ."<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 651.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 518.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 518-519.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 652.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 653.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 653.

This is good grist for the theologian's mill, although it is not couched in theological language. It reminds us of those theologians who have not been satisfied with an easy explanation of suffering and evil in the world, and who have sought to offer an explanation for it in more profound terms than we customarily hear. Such an attempt is that of Dr. Edwin Lewis in his book *The Creator and the Adversary*.

#### CONCLUSION

On the basis of this brief consideration of W. Somerset Maugham, it may be that Glenway Westcott is correct in saying that the critics have not dug deeply enough into the real Maugham, using only "a few conventional terms (which) keep appearing, as in a kaleidoscope, around and around." He may also be partially correct in saying that Maugham, as a twentieth-century Saintsbury, oversimplified and understated his role in the world of letters when he said, "The aim of art is to please." Westcott claims that Maugham does much more than please:

I maintain only that in all his best stories and novels there is an underlying, somewhat hidden significance, pervasive spiritual sense, important moral counsel, and general view of life and vision of the present world—supplementary to that sole purpose of entertainment continually announced by him—which will repay whatever trouble of intellect you may take in your reading.<sup>27</sup>

As if to give support to this evaluation, Maugham himself writes: "For art, if it is to be reckoned as one of the great values of life, must teach men humility, tolerance, wisdom and magnanimity. The value of art is not beauty, but right action."<sup>28</sup>

One can therefore only conclude that here is a many-faceted mind and personality—not easily judged on first reading, and completely defiant of being fitted into one ethical or philosophical category. The Christian preacher will do well occasionally to read him, if for no other reason than to follow the lines of a well-polished, urbane style. As he reads, he will do well (1) to remember that here is a point of view which reflects the thinking of millions of people; (2) to keep in mind the roots of Maugham's religious skepticism; and (3) to be on the alert for incidents and thoughts which will strike him as convincingly real and with which he may find himself in agreement. As he dips into Maugham's stinging realism, and as he runs upon his surprising insights, he will find himself the richer for having cultivated the literary company of this famous novelist.

<sup>27</sup> Westcott, G., *op. cit.*, p. xvi.

<sup>28</sup> *The Summing Up*, *op. cit.*, p. 678.



## Does Anybody Love God?

WALTER LOWRIE

NOT MANY days ago a guest in my house suggested the perturbing doubt whether a man of flesh and blood can really love a spirit. My guest was a godly man, a Baptist minister, and as such far more scrupulous than I in observing the minor precepts of the law, "touch not, taste not, handle not," or, let us say, thou shalt not smoke, thou shalt not drink. And yet the question he put seemed to imply that we can hardly attach a literal meaning to the injunction which Moses pronounced with the utmost emphasis and Jesus singled out as "the first and great commandment." My guest asked with evident concern what Jesus might have meant when he recited these words: "Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mk. 12:29, 30; Deut. 6:4, 5). Does this commandment expect men to love God in a literal sense, or, as most people think, is it fulfilled by a love of goodness and truth, by the worship of God and obedience to his will?

I had to admit that love of goodness and truth is hardly equivalent to a love for God himself, and that even worship and obedience must seem to God, who wishes to be loved, an inadequate substitute for loving him. Also that the idea of God, if it is only a concept, is not apt to inspire love in the full and real sense which evidently is required by this commandment. But I could point out that the God who made himself known to Moses under the name of Yahweh was very far from being an abstract concept, a generic notion of deity, but was a person emphatically "one" and singular; and that the "Lord God" whom Jesus made known as "the Father"—"my Father and your Father"—was not less concrete, personal and unique, and by the associations of such a name would naturally inspire a sublimated filial *eros*.

But though I could vindicate the *possibility* of loving God, I still was perturbed by the reflection that perhaps many Christians, men who believe in God and endeavor to obey him, and because of his commandment love their fellow men, may, by an astonishing inadvertence, have failed

---

WALTER LOWRIE, M.A., D.D., S.T.D., is a retired Episcopal minister living at Princeton, New Jersey, the author of many books and a translation of Kierkegaard. New Testament quotations in this article are from the Revised Standard Version.



to notice that we are expected first of all to love God. I was perturbed most of all by the thought that perhaps I do not *really* love God. Perhaps because I supposed faith with obedience was enough, I became a scholar of sorts—whereas, if I had been passionately in love with God, as the commandment evidently requires, I might have been a sort of apostle.

If in my childhood I had clearly understood that God was Love and loved me in particular, I might have loved him. But I learned to know God *via negationis*, being told that God was not like a human being—or human *bean*, as I understood it. I argued that, if God was not a *human bean*, he must somehow be conceived under the general category of “bean,” and the lima bean, which was my favorite, furnished the form and the color of my concept of God—but, of course, exalted to a size immensely great and given a tint of pallid or ethereal green. It goes without saying that under this concept I could not love God. I have learned from Kierkegaard to regard this experience of mine as an instance of “the self-ironizing of the understanding,” by which “the thought about the difference is confounded with the many thoughts about the different, and the Unknown is in a *diaspora* (dispersion), and the understanding has a facile choice among the things which are at hand or which the imagination may conceive—the monstrous, the ludicrous, etc., etc.”<sup>1</sup>

Making Him broken lights  
And a stifled splendor and gloom

is Tennyson’s expression of this experience. This suggests how questionable a thing religion is; it explains why it seldom leads to the love of God, and why the *tremendum* often obscures the *fascinans*—whereas, in fact, God is never really fascinating unless he is *tremendum*, “the great and terrible God” whom we are impelled nevertheless to love and to obey.

“It is a dull and obtuse mind,” said Coleridge, “which has to divide in order to distinguish.” If we separate the *tremendum* and the *fascinans*, we fall either into slavish fear or into sentimentalism. Kierkegaard combines the two closely in the formula, “sympathetic antipathy.” Luther once attained perfect dialectic equilibrium, and he exhibited this attainment in a very important place, *The Little Catechism*, where the explanation of each of the Ten Commandments is emphatically introduced by the injunction, “Thou shalt fear God and love him and keep all his commandments.” This is made very impressive by a tenfold repetition. Such a motivation of Christian duty is at once Prophetic, Apostolic and Catholic. If it had been

<sup>1</sup> Kierkegaard, S., *Fragments*, pp. 35f.

widely known as Luther's position, he could not have been suspected of immoralism, as he was on account of his polemical proclamation of *sola fide*, which was made *Urbi et orbi*. But the Catechism was strictly for home consumption and was regarded as milk for babes. How this simple wisdom might be made to agree dialectically with the *sola fide* which was proclaimed from the house tops, the world was not told.

My thoughts about God were still in that "dispersion" when as a small boy I made my "public profession of faith" to the session of elders in the rural church of which my father was pastor. When I recall that experience it seems to me ominous that none of the elders asked me if I loved God. Perhaps that question is never asked. It may be thought inappropriate in an examination about one's *faith*. But unfortunately one of the elders put me to confusion by exceeding his duty. He asked me, "Do you love the brethren?" I had to confess that I did not. For "the brethren" meant to me those horny-handed elders, who seemed to me immensely old, whom I could not love because they represented "the absolutely other." The elders did not press this question. Perhaps they recognized that it had nothing to do with a profession of faith.

So I began my juvenile Christian life under a serious misapprehension. I wonder how common this misapprehension may be. It would be tragic indeed if men were to suppose that the God who has made himself known to us as Father could be satisfied by obedience without love, or that Jesus Christ, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was made man and died for us, can be content merely with faith and worship. Kierkegaard affirmed in his Journal, "God has only one passion—to love and to be loved."<sup>2</sup> Suppose that in the whole of Christendom, where many, many millions of men profess to believe in God, nobody could be found who really loves him! This dreadful suspicion, far as it may be from the truth, might, I should think, prompt every man to interrogate anxiously his own heart.

It prompted me to search the Scriptures also—perhaps with a sly expectation of discovering by the dry labor of thumbing the pages of the Bible back and forth, tabulating long lists of words and counting them, that no one has ever really loved God, and that therefore I am no worse than other men. For if no lovers of God can be found in the Bible, it would be labor lost to seek for them further afield. In fact, it is not difficult to show that the Israelites not only ceased to love God but forgot him—in spite of the annual celebration of the Passover which was meant to remind

<sup>2</sup> XI<sup>2</sup> A 98, 99, 105.

them of his goodness. A great part of the Old Testament has no other purpose than to depict this deplorable situation. So it was also in the Church, even in apostolic times, though the New Testament is too short to give an account of subsequent times when, as Jesus prophesied, the love of the many waxed cold—and that in spite of the weekly celebration of the Eucharist which was meant to remind Christians of Christ's love! Yet all the industry one might expend with this sly intent will prove worse than vain, in view of the many examples we encounter in the Bible of men and women who loved God, "loved much," as Jesus said, and who reproach us for "loving little."

Suppose on the other hand that all Christians everywhere, indeed all men on the face of the whole earth, were to believe in God and to love him—but nobody kept his commandments, nobody did his will! What a deplorable situation this would be for God! But such a thing is impossible. It is assumed everywhere in the Bible that men who love God will endeavor to do his will;<sup>2</sup> and it was expected that where love was lacking fear would prevail—though fear was never regarded as the opposite of love, indeed it was nearly the equivalent of faith.

It is a vulgar misapprehension to suppose that in the Old Testament fear is the predominant motive for doing God's will, or for the performance of religious observances. As a matter of fact "the fear of God" is no more prominent in the Old Testament than in the New, taking account of the difference in size of the two books, the ratio being something more than 3 to 1. It is worthy of note that this expression occurs most frequently in the Psalms, where evidently it has lyrical associations. In the Old Testament as a whole the fear of God is associated not only with worship and obedience, but with love, joy, confidence, trust, devotion, holiness, wisdom, understanding and life, while it corresponds not chiefly to God's wrath, but to mercy, pity and salvation. Moreover, it is a striking fact that both in the Old Testament and the New (especially in Mt. 10:28-31) the warning to fear is not more frequent than the injunction, "Fear not"—in view of the fact that the fear of God delivers men from petty, base and servile fears.

Perhaps we might rather say that the *love* for God is more prominent in the Old Testament because of the fact that the word "faith" is not used there to compete with it—as also it is not used in the Gospel of St. John, which partly for that reason is so evidently the Gospel of love. For though St. John used the verb "to believe" ninety times, the word had in this

<sup>2</sup> Ex. 20:6; Deut. 7:9; Neh. 1:5; Dan. 9:14; I John 2:5; 5:3.

form no tendency to disparage love. "To believe" meant at bottom to believe in love (I John 4:16). What we "believe in" is of course the love of God, and St. John perceived that "we love him because he first loved us," and that "he that loveth God loveth his brother also." The verb "to believe" (*pisteuein*), as it was used by St. John, did not suggest assent to an abstract proposition; it affirmed rather a personal attitude of reliance upon a person in a concrete situation which plainly involved *eros*.

It may be that by talking so much as we do about faith we divert attention from the necessity of *loving* God. Obviously believing is prior in time to loving. For how are men to love him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they be sent? This rigorous sequence to which St. Paul appealed in Rom. 10:14, 15 might well have been carried on as far as I have ventured to carry it here, leading up to love for God; for with love we reach the last member of this sequence, before a man is emboldened to "call upon the name of the Lord" and be "saved." For nothing can be clearer than that, in the Old Testament and in the New, love for God is essential to salvation. "The crown of life" is promised only to those who love the Lord.<sup>4</sup>

No one can doubt that St. John, the beloved disciple, loved God. It is no less true, though it is not so evident, that St. Paul was an ardent lover. It must not be thought that brotherly love alone is exalted in the 13th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Though love is a human quality like faith and hope, it is exalted here as "the greatest" and must be understood pre-eminently as love to God, or more particularly as love for Christ. This Paul expressed mystically by the phrase "in Christ," and on another and more familiar plane by his longing to "depart and be with Christ." It is hardly possible to suppose that St. Paul did not mean to express this predominant passion in his magnificent hymn to love—as for a long time was supposed when love was here translated by "charity," which was commonly understood to mean only good deeds done to other men. One who has not yet learned to read can spell this out by beginning with the end, where St. Paul is thinking impatiently of the day when he shall see God "face to face" and fully understand as he has been fully understood. In contrast to this ardent love for God he disparages even the most extravagant exhibition of "charity" ("if I give away all that I have"); faith, too, in its most exalted manifestation ("though I had faith so that

<sup>4</sup> Jas. 1:12; 2:5; cf. I Cor. 2:5.

I could remove mountains"), and even the heroism of a martyrdom like that which awaited him ("though I give my body to be burned and have not love"). Clearly he regards love for God as the essence of Christianity.

The fact that St. Paul spoke more frequently of faith than of love was evidently due in part to the principal controversy with which he was pre-occupied; but it may have been due also to a laudable reluctance to say the perfect ceremony of love's part. Protestations of love, if not in some degree fictitious, are likely to be sentimental; and it was well understood in those days that love for God can be demonstrated only by love for the brethren. The disciples followed the teaching of Jesus in emphasizing this, and they could not emphasize it too strongly.

In those days there were many great lovers besides the Apostles. "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," was an expression of St. Stephen's love, and essentially this was the aspiration of every martyr. For it takes more than faith to make a martyr, it takes ardent love. One can conceive of a martyrdom supported only by a grim and stubborn faith, but that would have no resemblance to the martyrdom of Jesus. The martyrs were "witnesses" not only to a particular belief but to a singular love for God; and because this love was evident, they were "the seed of the church." Pagans were impressed at seeing "how these Christians love one another!" But this, they could partly understand: it differed only in degree from the love men showed to one another when they were at their best. They could understand too that the gods might be prompted by a freakish whim to love or show partiality for certain men. But the martyrs were witnesses to man's love for God—and for the pagans this was an astonishing phenomenon. Love did not express the relationship of a pagan to his gods, which was defined rather by the apprehension, "it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of a living god." Aristophanes suggests in one of his plays that, though philosophers might think up various reasons for belief in the existence of gods, the common man might find the most convincing proof in the experience that "the gods hate me!"

In those early days St. Paul could say of love that "it bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." Jesus had said of a sinful woman that "she loved much"—"Her many sins are forgiven, because she loved much." Upon this saying might be founded a theology so old that it will seem new in our day. Shall we call it Neo-Orthodoxy? "Because she loved much," said Jesus—not, because she believed much. No one need be scandalized by this word "because," for hardly will one who is conscious of many sins be disposed to vaunt his merit in loving much.



Salvation by love alone is a proposition far less doubtful and equivocal than "salvation by faith alone."

Although it cannot be said truthfully that all men in the church are lovers of God, there are lovers outside of Christendom who put us to shame and leave us with no excuse for not loving God. I am not thinking now of Socrates, nor of Spinoza, that unhappy Jew of Amsterdam who was intoxicated by his love for an *idea* of God: at this moment I have in mind Martin Buber, because I have lately been reading his books. No one can doubt that Martin Buber loves God. It is this which attracts me to him so warmly. And he loves Jesus too, though he does not know him as Christ and Lord. I am grateful to him for making it clear to me in one of his recent books that, though the word "faith" does not occur in the Old Testament, it aptly expresses the attitude of prophetic men towards the God of Israel—as St. Paul also perceived. This is expressed in the title of his book: *The Prophetic Faith*.

This needed to be said out loud by a Jew. For in the eighteenth century Moses Mendelssohn ingratiated himself with the philosopher-king in Sans Souci and with other eminent exponents of the Enlightenment by affirming that Judaism is not a religion, has no revealed dogmas such as the Christians have, no "saving truths," no "universal rational propositions" which cannot be demonstrated by the reason; it has only a divine ritual law, which among all its precepts does not contain the commandment, "Thou shalt believe." Liberal Jews continue to boast of these distinctions; but, in fact, they cannot be drawn without ignoring the Prophets—and the New Testament.

But most of all I am grateful to Martin Buber for showing me where to find in the Old Testament ardent expressions of love for Yahweh. The expression "them that love him" can be traced as far back as the Song of Deborah (Judges 5:31), and substantially the Song of Moses (Ex. 15:1-21) is a lyric expression of love for Yahweh, when Moses led the people in singing and Miriam his sister sang the refrain, while she clashed the timbrels and led the maidens in the dance on light fantastic toe. To such enthusiastic demonstrations men and women are naturally prompted by an ardent love for God. But, alas, not long after this the Children of Israel were to be seen dancing around the golden calf. It is easier to love an idol than a spirit. And how often in the history of the church men have preferred idols to God! When God the Father was portrayed without lovable traits, and when God the Son was depicted commonly as the Pantocrator or as the excruciated Victim, Christian people found nothing to love but the dear



little Bambino Jesus and the anatomical symbol of the Sacred Heart—and the Virgin Mother, upon whom was lavished the love which was diverted from God.

But how ardently King David loved Yahweh! And what beautiful psalms he composed to express his love for this Shepherd! When he escorted the Ark of Yahweh up to Jerusalem he put on a short tunic and "danced before Yahweh with all his might" (II Sam. 6:14), provoking thereby the contempt of his wife Michal, who because she was a royal princess by birth, despised, of course, all extravagant expressions of religious feeling—as sober Christians in later times condemned the Quakers and Shakers and Holy Rollers. Any psychologist could tell you, if he would, that to suppress the proper external expression of love for God means to suppress the experience of it in the heart.

We have no reason to be surprised that Israel's love for Yahweh was most exuberant in the earliest time, for that was the honeymoon, as Jeremiah expresses it (2:2): "the tender affection of thy youth, the love of thine espousals." It is significant that the Prophets conceived of the relation of Yahweh to Israel in terms of conjugal love. No other analogy would so clearly obviate the misunderstanding that it was *amor intellectualis* or a sentimental love. But against such a misunderstanding ample provision had been made in what might be called the marriage vow, the *Shema Israel* (Deut. 6:4-9), which is the most memorable passage in the Old Testament and has been faithfully remembered: "Hear, O Israel! Yahweh our God is one Yahweh; and thou shalt love Yahweh thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

I have already remarked that the possibility of loving Yahweh was posited by the fact that he bore this personal name and was definitely "one" and singular. This name was in use almost to the end of Old Testament times, as late as the book of Daniel, alongside of the generic word "God" and as a definition of it. Later a rabbinical scruple against uttering the sacred tetragram (written with four Hebrew consonants) led to the disuse of it, even when reading the ancient Scripture, where the word "Lord" was substituted for it (*Adonai* in Hebrew, *Kyrios* in Greek, *Dominus* in Latin).

This was advantageous in some respects, for it made it clear that the God of Israel was not a tribal or national God, but the God of all the earth, the God of heaven and of the whole world. On the other hand, the word "Lord" was not so plainly personal, being a generic title for the "gods many and lords many," and therefore it suggested less incentive to

love. It may be doubted whether the translators of our English versions were wise in following the rabbinical custom of suppressing the name Yahweh, except in nine cases where it could not be suppressed, and where, because of a little misunderstanding, they wrote "Jehovah." Still they did take pains to write the name LORD where it stood for Yahweh with small capitals—a fact which the religiously illiterate seldom observe. I am not making a plea for the restoration of this ancient name, except where it serves to illuminate the history of Israel. It was not used in the New Testament, and therefore ought not to be used in the church. Jesus here conformed to the custom of his people and chose a name more illuminating and more full of *eros* when he spoke of God as "the Father in heaven."

We do not have to read between the lines to find something of the same pathos in the "Hear, O Israel!" (Deut. 6:4-9) and other crucial utterances of the Old Testament. God speaks to his people like a father, making known to them his love, and expecting in return their love and obedience: "I beseech thee, Yahweh, the God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments" (Neh. 1:5); "showing mercy unto thousands of [generations] of them that love me, and keep my commandments" (Ex. 20:6; Deut. 5:10); "Take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of Yahweh charged you, to love Yahweh your God, and to walk in all his ways . . . and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul" (Josh. 22:5). With a father, however affectionate the relationship may be, a son may not presume to fraternize—as too many do with "the Father in heaven," spoiling that unique relationship with the familiarity which one may exercise with a multitude of friends and brothers. In view of what the father has done and may be expected to do, a son will be disposed to love and obey him.

Some years ago I was impressed by an article written by a competent Hebraist for *Zwischen den Zeiten* (therefore with the *imprimatur* of Karl Barth), arguing that the Ten Commandments are not to be understood as "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not," but as "Surely thou wilt love Yahweh thy God," etc., "Surely thou wilt not have other gods, take his name in vain, or commit adultery, or steal, or kill," etc. To me, who am no Hebraist, this seems very plausible in view of the passages which have here been quoted. At all events, Jesus did not say (as Mendelssohn affirmed) "Thou shalt believe," nor did he say on any occasion, "Thou shalt not": he said, "blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"—surely you will love your Father in heaven and try to walk in his ways.

The "Hear, O Israel," contains the chief commandment in the Old Covenant, and Jesus affirmed that it is also the chief commandment of the New Covenant.<sup>9</sup> Conjoining it with the "second" commandment (which he discovered in an unlikely place, Lev. 19:18), he declared, "There is no other commandment greater than these"—not even the *imitatio Christi* and martyrdom! We fall into dangerous error when we fail to observe how like Christianity is to Judaism! They are alike, though differently polarized. There is a typical likeness, yet an antithesis. What difference is there between them . . . except that one hails Jesus as "the Lord of glory"?

It might be said of the Passover that it was a love-feast with Yahweh, to remind the Jews how much reason they had to love God. Yet they forgot! It may be said with more reason that the Lord's Supper was instituted by Jesus to remind his disciples every week, if not every day, how much reason they have to love him. Yet we forget! How much alike Jews and Christians are! But if only we should both remember to love God! With this we should feel closely united to one another—even while divided. As for Christians, they are also divided into many sects; except in works of "charity," they have not really been brought together by ecumenical movements, but remain separated by questions of faith. Yet might they not be fused by an ardent love for God? I see no other way to unite them.

Lately I have taken to asking every one I meet—men, women and children, Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians and Catholics—"Do you love God?" It has cheered me to see the incredulous look with which this question is received—as though of course Christians may be supposed to love God. It has cheered me more to hear every one reply unhesitatingly, "Of course I love God." Only from professors of theology did I get no reply.

And yet, perhaps, we might love him more—with the whole heart and the whole soul and the whole mind, with all our might and main, as Jesus required. Perhaps, to use Jesus' words, we "love little because little has been forgiven"—which means that, in our view, there was little to forgive. And this means perhaps that before we can love God "much" (like the woman whom Jesus singled out for praise) we must become sinners, even in our own eyes. But this is what might be called a vicious circle, for we cannot perhaps know how sinful we are before we have had a vision of "the LORD, high and lifted up," such as Isaiah experienced in the Temple—a vision so poignant and so memorable that he could date it precisely, "in the year King Uzziah died."

<sup>9</sup> Mk. 12:29-31; Mt. 22:37, 38; Lk. 10:25-27.

# The Unifying Word

DAVID A. MacLENNAN

## I

CONTEMPORARY MINISTERS of Christ may be startled to realize that many persons who sit in pews on Sunday hope that the preacher may answer one crucial question. It is substantially the same question which a king secretly put to a prophet in a time of trouble: "Is there any word from the Lord?" (Jeremiah 37:17). It would be romantic to suggest that everyone who occupies space in the house of God on the Lord's day comes with such a question in his mind. Relatively few in any congregation are aware of such a reason for their presence in a service of public worship. Nevertheless, notwithstanding the widespread secularism of the age and the presence in every community of "experts" on almost every subject who are ready to deliver an answer at the drop of a query, a surprisingly large number of persons attend Protestant services in the hope that some authentic tidings from the Unseen may be delivered. Is there any word from the Lord which can help illumine the dark perplexities of our human situation? Is there any word that can help resolve the tensions, relieve the pressures, eradicate the sense of guilt, which plague every man in this age of anxiety and fear? Is there any word that God lives, and that he cares about what happens to his human family? Is there any word from the Lord that will make sense out of the innocent suffering for the guilty, that will bring peace where now is civil war within the individual and within the world society?

That men and women of the mid-twentieth century come to church with this basic question is at once our opportunity and our peril. It is our opportunity in that it provides us with hearers for our message. How shall we communicate the Good News entrusted to us without hearers? We may wish that more would come that they might hear and receive the Christian answer; that so many do come creates our chance to transmit that which we long to impart. It is also our peril, for we may surrender to the recurring temptation to "prophecy smooth things" in our ambition to

---

DAVID A. MacLENNAN, M.A., D.D., is Professor of Preaching and Pastoral Care at Yale University Divinity School, New Haven, Connecticut. This address was delivered as the English Lecture on Preaching at Andover-Newton Theological Seminary Convocation, October 10, 1951.

increase and retain an audience. (Cf. Isaiah 30:9-11.) A Christian counselor in Baltimore advised a young woman working in Manhattan that part of the cure for her spiritual malaise might be found in regular attendance at a certain New York church. She demurred vehemently on the grounds that the popular preacher of that church would only "spray her with perfume." She needed someone who in the name of the Lord would speak penetratingly to her condition. Perhaps she asked too much, and yet, was not her indictment an indirect tribute to the office of the Christian preacher? Men and women expect great things from us who stand in Christ's stead. Have we a word from the Lord to deliver?

I would not be a clamorous exponent of the obvious. Yet I would say with all earnestness that the Christian preacher has *the* Word from the Lord. More accurately, to us has been given the Word of God to proclaim. What is meant by this currently revived phrase, the Word of God? Since I am, as I have learned in academic circles to say quickly, not technically competent to define all that is meant by this phrase, I hasten to define the term as I now use it. It is all that theologians have helped us understand by the total event of Jesus Christ. Our unique and indispensable message is the story of that Word. "It is the story," wrote Professor A. M. Hunter of Mansfield College, Oxford,<sup>1</sup> "of how in the fullness of time God completed His saving purpose for His people by sending His Son, the Messiah, and of the means of salvation. . . . It is the story of how God decisively intervened in human history in the person of Jesus Christ. It is a story in a form so simple that children can grasp it, though its profound implications for man and the world and history must be worked out by theologians." (If someone asks me if my understanding of the Word of God involves the Logos theology of the Fourth Gospel, or is due to my acceptance of Karl Barth's interpretation, or perhaps, noting my name and spiritual ancestry, asks if mine is the gospel according to John Calvin, I will practice evasive action! My esteemed colleague Professor H. Richard Niebuhr assures me that in using this phrase or any other equivalent, we must remember always that while such a concept may help to interpret the Lord Jesus Christ, it is he, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the final interpreter of the concept that we apply to him.)

The Lord Jesus Christ, in his human birth, his earthly life and teaching, his death, his resurrection, his abiding presence in his Body the Church—all that our fathers pointed to when they spoke of his Person and Work—is the "Word from the Beyond for our human predicament." This is the

<sup>1</sup> *Introducing the New Testament*. London: S. C. M. Press, Ltd., 1945, p. 115.



creative and redemptive Word which God commissions us to declare, to interpret, to apply to ourselves and to our fellow souls.

One reason why we may speak truly of the inexhaustible riches of Christ lies in his perennial relevancy. "The Word lives on." In the first century, in the sixteenth, or in the twentieth, he confronts men as a new revelation suited to their needs. Human needs like the human nature from which they arise may remain constant, but due to peculiar conditions of an age, certain needs emerge that were previously hidden or were present in less acute form. Likewise Jesus Christ remains the same yesterday, today, and forever. Yet he who makes all things new is himself experienced in powers which appear new to each generation. He is the eternal Contemporary. Today our world is desperately divided by rival ideologies, torn by suspicion and strife, rent asunder by the very forces we had thought would bind us closer together—scientific discoveries, new means of communication and transportation. Do you know these lines by a contemporary poet?

#### NUCLEAR FISSION

A yea and a nay  
 Had spun as one,  
 In secret compact  
 With the sun.  
 Antagonists  
 In close accord:  
 Opposites  
 That had not warred.  
 But Man, this union  
 Splitting asunder  
 From discord looses  
 Fire and thunder.  
 And now aghast  
 At his startling deed,  
 Craves union as  
 His own great need.<sup>2</sup>

Perceptive men and women turn to us and ask if Christ can help us achieve the union that our ingenious plans and organizations without him are impotent to do.

To those who seek, and to those who do not but who should, we are empowered to declare that Christ is the one power whereby the walls of partition in the house of man's soul today can be broken down. What God in Christ did in Palestine, and in every country and century since, he is

<sup>2</sup> Doyle Hennessy in *From One Word: Selected Poems from Spirit*. Devin-Adair Co. Used by permission of the publishers.

able and eager to do today. If only we could say it as we should! If only we could become responsive instruments of his reconciling truth! But with God all things are possible, even with such frail and sinful representatives as we his ministers. I have always found comfort in the Prayer Book collect which, in its modern form, reads: "Almighty and everlasting God, who alone workest great marvels, Send down upon thy Ministers and all Congregations committed to their charge, the healthful spirit of thy grace. . . ." Who has not wished to pray after a painfully inadequate sermon as Charles Spurgeon is reported once to have prayed: "O Thou who canst make something out of nothing, bless this sermon!" Here then is our solemn obligation and glorious privilege: to present Christ as the power of God unto salvation from the tragic divisions and disunity our sinfulness has created within personality, within the social group, and the wider areas of international relationships.

## II

A story inspired by *The Story* points to this aspect of the truth as it is in Jesus. It is *The Big Fisherman* by that popular modern novelist, the late Lloyd C. Douglas. Despite the faults which literary critics find in any didactic novel, it is interesting to note that within the last year at least one college teacher of English literature risked his professional reputation by stating that Mr. Douglas' last book "has vitality enough to survive" and that "it will outlast a good many more respectfully reviewed volumes on today's best-seller list."<sup>3</sup>

The germane incident is as follows. Voldi, the Arab prince, writes to his Roman friend Mencius. In the letter he describes his first impressions of the Nazarene Carpenter. He had gone to an open field and had seen the strange Galilean in action, had heard him preach. He describes the action that led the young man to say, "All I know is that I was blind and now I see." He continues:

My own opinion of the mysterious Nazarene is difficult to define. On first sight of him I was a bit disappointed. He is not an heroic figure. . . . The man has a compelling voice. I can't describe it or the effect of it. It's a unifying voice that converts a great crowd of mutually distrustful strangers into a tight little group of blood relatives. . . . I never have had any respect for people who pretend to work wonders, but the things that happened out there yesterday—if not miraculous—need quite a lot of explaining. . . . But it was what the Carpenter said, even more than what he did, that has disposed me to write you at such length of this strange business.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Bode, Carl (University of Maryland), "Lloyd Douglas: Minority Report." *The Christian Century*, July 5, 1950. Also cf. *RELIGION IN LIFE*, Summer 1950, pp. 440ff. "Lloyd Douglas and America's Largest Parish."

<sup>4</sup> Douglas, Lloyd, *The Big Fisherman*. Thomas Allen, Ltd., Toronto, 1948, p. 322.

*"The man has a compelling voice . . . . It is a unifying voice."* So it was in Palestine over nineteen centuries ago. Men and women of vagrant impulses, of shattered and scattered purposes, suffering what today we would call disintegration, found themselves pulled together around a new center, were inwardly united, furnished with a commanding goal, and motive power to move toward it. In every subsequent generation the Word made flesh, the Incarnate Word of God, has worked this miracle in countless personalities. That which Vachel Lindsay was sure happened when General William Booth entered Heaven has been reproduced in human lives in every generation:

The lame were straightened, withered limbs uncurled  
And blind eyes opened on a new, sweet world.

Drabs and vixens in a flash made whole!  
Gone was the weasel-head, the snout, the jowl!  
Sages and sibyls now, and athletes clean,  
Rulers of empires, and of forests green! <sup>5</sup>

He is the unifying Word, the power of God unto salvation from the inner conflicts which so commonly and continuously afflict us. We who know this through firsthand experience and not merely by hearsay, testify that he is the divine answer to the psalmist's prayer which in varying forms psychotherapists and pastors hear rising from the depths of many tortured souls: "Unite my heart to fear Thy name." (Psalm 86:7) Nor is it only the cry of "unwashed legions with the ways of Death" to whom this Word must be uttered; to many who never sink into "ditches dank" he must come, if they are to know something more than a spurious peace of mind and do something more than practice the art of happiness. Dr. Alexander Whyte's Edinburgh congregation included many men of privilege and wealth whose outward circumstances rarely betrayed any inward spiritual need. Dr. Whyte was astonished, therefore, when a prominent citizen and devoted friend of the minister said quietly to him as he was about to leave after a conference on some church matter: "Have you no' a word for an old sinner?" We may be sure that the one whom Barrie called "the last of the Puritans" had a word, and pointed his friend to the Word which assures the penitent today as long ago: "Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace."

Christ is the unifying Word whom we must transmit to men and women who have to overcome the interior centrifugal forces making havoc of their peace and usefulness. Is not Christian preaching indeed what a

<sup>5</sup> Lindsay, V., *Collected Poems*. Copyright, The Macmillan Company, 1925. Used by permission of The Macmillan Company.

scholarly English layman, Bernard Manning of Cambridge, called it—"a manifestation of the Incarnate Word, from the Written Word, by the spoken word"? Are we not called to such "manifestation" week by week?

Does someone ask if preaching alone, this apparently innocuous event in the worship of the church, can do this? Obviously, if there is such a thing as "preaching alone," preaching by one who disparages all other offices of the Christian minister, the claim must be challenged. Forty-four years ago the British theologian Peter Taylor Forsyth dogmatically asserted that "with its preaching Christianity stands or falls."<sup>6</sup> He made it clear that he meant biblical, Christocentric preaching. We may further assume that he did not mean preaching in isolation from the known needs of persons in their manifold relationships. Just as the conflict of pulpit versus altar is essentially false, so the issue sometimes heard today of the preaching ministry versus pastoral counseling or of leadership in worship or of parish administration is unnecessary and harmful. If preaching is the communication of the Good News of God's action in Christ to people in their known needs, how can we dispense with or treat as an option the ministry of counseling? Pastoral care provides much of the insight necessary to pastoral preaching, and preaching creates opportunities for counseling.

Doubtless the Spirit of God on occasion uses mightily a message by one who is a peripatetic prophet with no continuing parish. Doubtless also the most effective preaching is the pastoral preaching by a man or woman who knows men and women and boys and girls in their total environment, and who loves them for Christ's sake and their own, in spite of what he knows. Then it is that the minister becomes a transmitter of the Unifying Word; declaring in love both the judgment and mercy of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then it is that such persons are confronted by the living Word, are enabled to receive him and are thereby singularly assisted by the divine Spirit to grow into fullness of life within the community of Christ's people.

Such communication requires not only a dedicated person, one who is himself "in Christ" to use Paul's favorite phrase. It requires that each of us who would preach Christ shall be faithful in our ministry in every area of our vocation. Let me give you an opinion from *The Horse's Mouth*, by which I mean the novel by Joyce Cary. After three preachers had visited his studio and given an unfavorable verdict on his new painting (an unconventional interpretation of the Fall), Gully Jimson, the artist, in speaking to a young admirer, excused their unfair judgment. Of course, said

<sup>6</sup> Forsyth, P. T., *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind*. London, Independent Press, 1949, p. 1.

the artist, such men could not like his picture. "How could they?" he asked. "They haven't time. A preacher hasn't time to like anything or even to know anything. . . ." <sup>7</sup> The scintilla of truth in Jimson's observation derives from the fact that one of our occupational hazards consists of our overactivity. A modern urban parish can become a hectic series of rides on a fascinating merry-go-round. Our particular guardian angel may observe us get on and occasionally get off, only to wonder where we have been. If we emulate our divine Master and seek to go about doing good, we frequently find ourselves just going about. Solutions for this insidious problem are simpler to urge than to devise and apply. Yet we must not be of those who have not "time to like anything or even to know anything."

We must study to show ourselves approved, not only in our years of basic training within seminary walls, but until the last bell is rung, and lessons done we homeward run. Who was it among our brethren who said that too many of us act as if the apostle's famous counsel to Timothy ran as follows: "Study to show thyself"? One of our temptations may not be to whine (although I am not so sure, as I recall indigo Mondays); too commonly it is a temptation to shine. Therefore if I may be excused both moralizing and directive counseling—a large request to make!—let me urge upon you the resolution to take time, to *make* time, in order to know as much as you can of your charter, the Bible, of a dynamic Christian theology, of the complex society in which we function, of history, of the sciences and the humanities, and above all of that pitiful and yet heroic compound of dust and divinity, human nature. That you will ever deepen your knowledge of him who is the truth and life, the way and the power to travel it, we may assume from your commitment and experience.

### III

Our Lord, whose representatives we are, commissions us to convey the unifying word. As such we preach to individuals. It is a truism to add that never do we preach to individuals as if they lived in complete isolation from others, from the society of which they are members. Writing in the New York Times Book Review a year ago on "The Mirror of a Violent Half Century," Lewis Mumford insisted that "the writer is still a maker, a creator, not merely a recorder of fact but above all an interpreter of possibilities." <sup>8</sup> Substitute for "writer" the word "preacher," and you have a searching definition of our task as heralds of God in such a time as this. To us has been given this high and exacting task of interpreting possi-

<sup>7</sup> Cary, J., *The Horse's Mouth*. Harper & Brothers, 1944, p. 43.

<sup>8</sup> Jan. 14, 1950.



bilities of new life and unfailing joy and peace which are available in Christ for all who commit themselves to him in trust and obedience.

Bishop Hazen G. Werner of Ohio tells of the layman who stood by the pulpit as the preacher prepared to preach to a downtown congregation. This man knew the power of Christ to change defeat into victory and he would whisper to his pastor: "Preacher, tell them they can." But we must also be interpreters of the forces which play upon people and so frequently reduce them to confusion and despair. Not that we must become chiefly clerical sociologists or rebel prophets in the midst of social disorder. Yet there is a sense in which the house of God is the seer's house, the place where understanding is increased and insights into the nature of complex forces are sharpened. Analysis, however profound and accurate, is not enough; there is such a malady as paralysis by analysis. We must not only know where we are and why we are where we are, we must see the place toward which we should travel and the resources for our pilgrimage. As we act as guides, ever seeking the mind of Christ, we cause men to hear the divine unifying Word. This Word is for a gravely divided society. This Word releases the wisdom and the power by which, however long and painful the struggle, mankind can realize true community. Recall Voldi's words in *The Big Fisherman*: "The man (Jesus) has a unifying voice that converts a great crowd of mutually distrustful strangers into a tight little group of blood relatives."

Merely repeating Christ's glorious words, or the potentially creative words of Christian experience, will not work this needed conversion. Only when through us the Word gets through to the minds and consciences and emotions of men, and men and women who acknowledge him to be Savior and Lord demonstrate the community of the Holy Spirit, does the miracle happen. It is only men and women "in Christ" grappling with the divisive issues and forces of the time who offer any hope of achieving one world on any basis that will satisfy free men. When the church is the church in the New Testament sense, men transcend their political and social differences and move in ordered freedom toward something approximating economic justice. To call men to accept this commission is also the preacher's duty. St. Paul stated this ministry in unforgettable terms, reminding us first of the initial fact, the warrant for our service: "if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." Then to make sure that no one miss the imperative, like a wise preacher he repeats it in another way: "that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses

against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." (II Cor. 5) God in Christ has commissioned us with the message of reconciliation. To us he has given this amazing privilege and staggering task of being his personal representatives, God appealing directly through us to men of sharply conflicting social and political views. "We beseech you on behalf of God, be reconciled to God."

To proclaim the unifying Word we must know what it is, or more precisely, who he is. The Rev. Daniel T. Jenkins, one of the influential younger leaders of British Congregationalism, in a provocative message to ministers about the communication of the gospel, said:

. . . one of the chief obstacles to the spreading abroad of the Gospel today is the simple fact that too few of us who are commissioned to proclaim it know what it is. In saying this, I am not suggesting that what it is can be neatly and precisely defined once for all so that we need not strive always to renew our grasp of it and see how it is true for us in ever-changing human situations. . . . But what above all else we have to be is men who are able to move familiarly about the world of the Bible, because we possess clear and tested principles by which to interpret it, and are living embodiments of the tradition of the great Church throughout the ages set down in the midst of a particular congregation.

Dr. Jenkins then rightly said, that after all is why congregations need a learned ministry, not merely in the formal academic sense "but learned in the living history of the ways of God with his people." Was it merely the prejudice of an English nonconformist who found needed iron for his soul in neo-orthodoxy, which led him to make these assertions?

Our churches do not keep us primarily to be helpful counsellors, cheerful friends, homespun oracles, or even efficient administrators.

They keep us, in the first instance, to open the Scriptures for them so that they may know their way about in them and, against the background of the experience of the great Church, to help them interpret them to their own condition, and to perform those ordinances appointed by Scripture for maintaining God's people in the way everlasting.<sup>9</sup>

To know God in Christ, to commit ourselves to all that we know of him through his self-revelation in the Son of his love, this is primary. To know our way about in the Scriptures in some systematic fashion also is high in the list of our responsibilities. A further demand is inescapable. One of my favorite "whodunit" authors and lay theologians, Miss Dorothy L. Sayers, has said, "The minute you take Christ as somebody real, you've landed in theology." Could our failure to communicate the gospel be due at least in part to our unwillingness to become working theologians? Can we continue long as effective interpreters of Christ if we do not know

<sup>9</sup> *Theology Today*, July, 1949, p. 181.

the Scripture and try to set it in "the light of the developed experience of the church," and after that try "to relate the message of the gospel to the rest of human experience" coherently and persuasively?

A highly intelligent American whose own economic misfortune provided leisure to hear many contemporary preachers, lately set down his impressions and delivered his soul of certain penetrating judgments.

We ought to feel a sense of shame, [he began] over much of the twaddle from our pulpits that is ranked as "preaching." If the Protestant pulpit has lost its authority, it is asinine for us to blame this loss of authority on the competition from other bidders for the ears of our generation. In 10,000 church buildings next Sunday, people will still meet for worship, hoping to be fed something that will be more than a revamped editorial, or a compilation of superficial reading, or a treatise on scientific achievement. They are waiting to be fed with the deep thinking of a devoted servant of Christ, couched in language revealing and intimate enough to let them see their own hearts. There is too little of this kind of preaching across our land today. It is no wonder that so many people in a professedly Christian country never attend a church service, until they are carried in. There is a desperate need for real preaching, for the Word enfleshed and vibrant.

Mr. Edward Williams who wrote those scorching words<sup>10</sup> may have oversimplified the causes of the absent treatment many give to our church services today. At least he has underscored the truth that our chief purpose in preaching is to proclaim and interpret the Word. This Christian critic also added that the preacher "fails to relate the word to the condition of the hearer. He should have the accuracy of a craftsman and the wisdom of a friend." Too often he finds that the servant of Christ is severely handicapped by what he calls "his unconverted ego, his prima donna complex, his staging, his grand manner!"

Our man in the pew urges us to "relate the word to the condition of the hearer" with the wisdom of a friend. We must know the Word and we must know the world in which our people work, suffer, and aspire. In a recent biography of Ralph Waldo Emerson, we are told that one of the friends of our Yankee Plato, Caroline Sturgis, warned the poet against abstractions. "She advised him to make sawdust pies with his little daughter Edith rather than continue to question the invisible. And she offered to take him into the mountains to hunt rattlesnakes, an occupation likely to school him in concrete realities. Perhaps a few of us need some such drastic treatment to "school us in concrete realities."<sup>11</sup>

My own impression is that this generation of students and graduates of our best seminaries know rattlesnakes, can classify and dissect them. It

<sup>10</sup> *Monday Morning*, April 24, 1950. Philadelphia, General Council of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.

<sup>11</sup> Rusk, R., *Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1949, p. 307.

must be acknowledged too that many good ministers are fairly expert in making sawdust pies with and for children. It is not so evident that we communicate the Faith with clarity and vibrancy.

## IV

A discipline all of us must undertake continuously is this: we must strive to communicate simply and vividly. Technical jargon, omnibus phrases which glitter but do not illumine, verbal abstractions dearly loved by "intellectuals"—these may impress; they do not edify. "Tell me the story simply" may be a juvenile request to make of professional scholars; it is a plea to preachers by lay folk which must be heeded.

For what comfort it affords, we can remind ourselves that other learned professions suffer from similar difficulties in communication. A cultured physician, until recently the head of the Department of Pathology and Bacteriology in the University of Toronto, Dr. William Boyd, surprised his medical colleagues in a recent convention by delivering a pungent address on "Words." A report of his lecture shows that this eminent medical practitioner is convinced that many of his colleagues have sold their birth-right of English pure and undefiled for a potted message; that this is due largely to a diet of canned food for the mind. Said Dr. Boyd:

The person who cannot make a concise, lucid and intelligible statement in speech and in writing is an uneducated person, no matter how many scientific facts he may have at his disposal. Before a boy leaves school he should be given some feeling for words, so that he may recognize the difference between a sentence by Joseph Conrad and one by L'il Abner. . . . The difficulty is not how to write, but how to write what you mean. . . . The craftsman is proud and careful of his tools; the surgeon does not operate with a blunt knife; the musician must have his instrument tuned to pitch.

Then he suggested this embarrassing test for teachers—and preachers: "In appointing a professor we should ask not only 'does this man know what he is talking about?' but also, 'will his audience know?' . . . We must avoid the blunderbusses of vague phrases such as 'in relation to,' 'in regard to,' etc." (He might have added some polysyllabic theological terms.)

More than two centuries ago in England, the secretary to the commissioners of excise wrote a letter on this subject to a supervisor: "The commissioners on perusal of your diary observe that you make use of many affected phrases and incongruous words. I am ordered to acquaint you that if you hereafter continue that affected and schoolboy way of writing, and to murder the language in such a manner, you will be discharged as a fool." A clear statement, without ambiguity.<sup>12</sup>

Does this mean that we shall confine our sermon vocabulary to the eight

<sup>12</sup> *The Globe and Mail*. Toronto, Canada, July 27, 1951.

hundred words of Basic English? On the contrary, we must use all the riches of our language, but discerningly and always with the aim of attaining clarity. Politicians, and even government civil servants, seem sometimes to avoid clarity of language on purpose. A senator once remarked that Americanism was to be the campaign issue of the coming election. When asked what Americanism meant he said he did not know, but it was an infernally good word to win an election with. Our pulpit speech can be music in prose, but it must be music that can be understood by the wayfaring man.

Christian preaching in a profound sense is always preaching for a verdict. Given free course the Word carries its self-authenticating power to reconcile men to the divine Reality, to themselves, and to each other. Always our words must be from the depth of our personal faith and knowledge and from the knowledge which our experience of God's love in Christ imparts. The words which are vehicles of the Word must be the clearest and most compelling that we can fashion. Only so will the seekers become finders and finders keepers. In his essay on Robert Burns, Stopford Brooke makes the charge against Ayrshire ministers of the eighteenth century: "The Christian ministers of Ayrshire had blotted out Christ for Burns, and threw him back unhelped upon himself. . . . Burns was always coming to himself like the Prodigal Son, and saying, 'I will arise and go to my Father,' but he never got more than half way—never in this world." God in Christ entrusts us with the Word which alone empowers a man to go all the way. Given our dedication he is able to keep us from blotting out Christ by our ineptitudes in speech and life.

Do you remember in Richard Llewellyn's moving novel, *How Green Was My Valley*, the description of the preacher and of his sermon? Whatever the limitations of that dominie's theology, he loved Christ and his flock and released through word and deed the Unifying Word:

The minister started to speak as though he were talking to a family, in a voice not loud, not soft. But presently you would hear a note coming into it and your hair would go cold at the back. It would drop down and down, until you could hear what he said only from the shapes of his mouth, but then he would throw a rock of sound into the quiet and bring your blood splashing up inside you, and keep it boiling for minutes while the royal thunder of his voice proclaimed again the Kingdom of God, and the Principality of Christ the man. That is how we came from chapel every Sunday re-armed and re-armoured against the world, re-strengthened, and full of fight.

So does God send through his preachers the word that heals, that empowers and that unifies his children. Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end.



# The Holy Catholic Church

GERALD KENNEDY

**T**HERE are a large number of Protestants who are troubled whenever they use the phrase *The Holy Catholic Church* in the Apostle's Creed. They feel that we are confessing our faith in Roman Catholicism and admitting our own lower status. It seems like a betrayal of our Protestant heritage. But when we understand the real significance of the words, we shall find in them rich meanings which we shall not want to give up. They signify something precious which belongs to us and to every Christian church.

We are confessing our faith in the universal Church of which we are a part. Roman Catholicism is an important part of that common fellowship, and so are we. This part of the Creed takes us back to the true church of Christ, which the Reformation sought to recover. We were not departing from the true tradition when we broke from the Medieval Church, but endeavoring to return to it. Every Protestant Christian has a just and equal claim to all the riches of the Christian Church from its very beginning. It is time to think more deeply about this mighty movement of which we are a part, and which the Creed calls *The Holy Catholic Church*.

## I

Let us begin by looking at our weaknesses and sins. There is never a man nor an organization which possesses all of the truth. Whenever we grasp one part of reality, we nearly always neglect another equally important part. Usually, we take the great ideas which come to us and overstate them. If they are not balanced and checked by their opposing truths, they can become harmful if not destructive. We must confess that in order to emphasize great religious insights, we have usually distorted them.

For one thing, we have done this with our individualism. That each man stands in a personal relation to God and that Christ died for the separate souls of men, is one of our most precious beliefs. We must not lose sight of this though the heavens fall. But that each man has a right to ignore the testimony of his brethren and assume that his own experience is the only criterion, is foolishness and madness. The end result is the mushroom growth

---

GERALD KENNEDY, Ph.D., D.D., is Bishop of The Methodist Church, Portland Area, in Portland, Oregon, and author of several books. He explores in this article the implications of "catholicity."

of strange sects and weird organizations, so often associated with Los Angeles. This is individualism out of control like cancer, and it has about the same effect on the Body of Christ.

As Christians, we have a responsibility to one another and to the church. In the great Protestant denominations, we have room enough for any man to move about and express himself. Difficulty arises only when some individual member insists that all others must agree with him and accept his partial truth as the whole truth. Then when he insists on breaking up the fellowship and starting a new sect, he weakens the church and makes our freedom a scandal in the world. It is this irresponsible divisiveness that our critics rightly point out as un-Christian.

G. K. Chesterton said that every heresy was an effort to narrow the church. He was right, for the heretic attempts to substitute a necessary but partial truth for the whole magnificent sweep of the gospel. The result is the creation of narrow fanatical groups whose spirit becomes bitter and hateful. There can be nothing more distressing to our Lord than the creation of a spirit which he cannot own, in the name of standing for a theological doctrine which represents only one side of a paradox. There is a vast amount of the bitter divisiveness which has plagued Protestantism which is not more nor less than pride.

For another thing, we have sinned by trying to achieve freedom without authority. The Reformation emphasis on the priesthood of all believers was one of the great affirmations in Christian history. Never will we be willing to surrender this insistence that every man can go directly to the Throne of Grace, and that no man is dependent on a priest or an ecclesiastical system for salvation. But when this leads to the assumption that every man is an expert in theology, we make the whole principle ridiculous. I do not know what reason there can be for sending our young ministers to a theological seminary, if every untrained, uneducated person is to be regarded as having equal knowledge and equal authority in the church. When one listens to the superstitious nonsense that so often passes for religion in our decadent days, he wonders if it is not about time to realize that freedom does not mean that ignorance is of equal status with knowledge.

There are too many Protestant Christians who have unconsciously assumed that sincerity is enough. It was pointed out not long ago by an eminent historian that the unprincipled rascals have not done nearly so much harm to America as the sincere but mistaken leaders who, according to their lights, were honorable men. We need to keep our freedom in check

by the Christian tradition, and we need the guidance of men who have spent their lives studying the history and the nature of the Christian faith.

This unchecked individualism and this freedom which has turned into license is at the root of one of the unloveliest products of Protestantism, namely, competing churches in small communities. If there is a more un-Christian sight in the world than three or four struggling, weak, bickering, jealous congregations where there ought to be only one, I do not know what it is. We have made much progress in this field in recent years, but there is still much to be done. Just as important as building churches in the unchurched areas of this country, is the task of closing and uniting churches in the overchurched communities of America. For nothing weakens the church more or brings upon our heads a more justified contempt.

A small boy brought home his report card which showed good grades in everything but Conduct. When his mother asked him about that, he replied, "It is because conduct is my hardest subject." Quite so! It is with all of us, including the Protestant churches. We cannot expect to accomplish the tasks before us or win the respect of outsiders, until our conduct reflects Christian ethics instead of the cut-throat competition of the market. This divisiveness and competition is sin and God cannot bless our efforts as he would like to bless them, until we confess our sin and repent.

## II

Yet if we are aware of our sins only and unappreciative of our virtue, we shall not be good servants of the church nor of the Kingdom of God. Too many members of the Protestant churches have no real appreciation of their heritage, and fall victim to any number of half-truths and misleading impressions concerning their communions. All men have reaped the benefits of the Reformation and a greater number of our blessings stem directly from that mighty movement than many of us recognize. Isaiah might have been speaking of us when he said,

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

For one thing we have created a healthy variety of denominations. In a day when the conflict is between totalitarianism and democracy, it is not hard to see which interpretation of religion is most on the side of democracy. We have believed that people are different in their temperaments and in their approach to religion. A dead conformity has never

appealed to Protestants and as a result, we have a wide range of churches offering a great many different types of services and emphases within the framework of the Christian faith.

Who among us would want to say that the great peace witness of churches like the Mennonites is to be decried? The simple, heroic stand of these groups of Christians has enriched every church and held before all of us one of the tensions Christ creates. Or take the temperance crusades of the Methodists. There are any number of sincere Christians who think this emphasis is exaggerated, but nearly all of us would agree that with alcohol the evil it is in our society, we ought not to lose sight of the Christian teaching in this matter. Some people can worship best with a great deal of ritual in the service and they prefer to have prayers read to them by their minister out of the Book of Common Prayer. There are others who want no formality whatsoever and find their home in the Quaker fellowship, which has been an enriching influence for all of us. I speak for any number of Christians when I say that all these different churches have enriched my own life and experience. As a Methodist, one branch of the larger family, I claim them all and confess my debt to them all. This is one place where Paul's word, "It all belongs to you," has a particularly appropriate modern meaning. And this is not weakness, but strength.

Not only that, but also we have a healthy criticism which operates within Protestantism. Ministers and congregations are prodded to expand their programs and become more aggressive evangelistically by the example of other denominations within the community. Even Roman Catholicism in America has been affected by this situation, and one priest told me that the debt Catholicism owes to Protestantism, while never publicly acknowledged, was nevertheless recognized by many thoughtful Catholics. Certainly in the countries where a state church has been established, the free churches have exerted a healthy criticism and a beneficial, godly rivalry.

Whenever they move to a new community, a growing number of church members seek out the church which seems best able to minister to their needs. There are still large numbers of people who would be horrified at the idea of leaving the church of their fathers, but increasingly, thoughtful Protestants prefer a living fellowship of another denomination to a lifeless one of their own. And while I may be too much influenced by free enterprise and open competition, I cannot help but feel that this is good.

The example of a great program on the part of any church has an influence on all the churches. We dare not rest on our laurels if another church is heeding the trumpet call to march. It seems obvious to me that

all the post-war crusades of the major denominations have been stimulated and prodded by one another. When Harold Ross, the editor of *The New Yorker*, died, one of the editors wrote an article about him in which he said: "He left a note on our desk one day apropos of something that had pleased him in the magazine. The note simply said, 'I am encouraged to go on.' That is about the way we feel today, because of his contribution. We are encouraged to go on."<sup>1</sup> And that is the way we feel when another denomination accomplishes something fine. We are all encouraged to go on.

### III

Now in the light of this brief and admittedly inadequate survey, what are the dangers we ought to avoid in the future? We are moving very rapidly toward even greater co-operation and fellowship, and we ought to be aware of certain pitfalls in the way. Movements which do not take the time to chart their course and analyze their trends end up in the same place as a boy I read about recently. He had never had enough pancakes because his mother insisted that three were sufficient for anyone. He went to visit his favorite aunt and she told him that at breakfast he could have all the pancakes he wanted. He did pretty well, but finally he slowed up and then stopped. "Don't you want any more pancakes?" his aunt asked him. "No," he said, "I don't want any more and I don't even want those I have already had." Those who think that undefined church union is the answer to all our problems might end up one day like that boy.

For one thing, we do not want uniformity. To crush out the individualism of our churches and force all of them into a common polity and theological mould would be loss and not gain. Such a policy tends to strengthen the weak, but it also weakens the strong. I want to speak about the *Kyodan*, the United Church of Japan, in this respect. No one can see what that church has accomplished without admiring it, but there are certain object lessons which it gives us and it would be folly to ignore them.

The *Kyodan* is a union of most of the major denominations operating in Japan. It has suffered one major withdrawal and it may be faced with another in a year or so. But in all probability, it will remain the largest Protestant church in the country. I think that its greatest weakness, for which it cannot be blamed, has been an inability to take full advantage of one of the greatest evangelistic opportunities of our generation. It has been unable to do so because it was forced to spend a great deal of energy on problems of organization. There is no way to bring different traditions

<sup>1</sup> *The New Yorker*, Dec. 15, 1951.



together but by patience, tact, and compromise. This is all very well, but those are not the characteristics of an aggressive evangelism. When you must spend most of your time keeping the machinery running smoothly, you are not likely to have much time or energy left for moving forward. Some believe that this is a price well worth paying for a united church.

Yet, is it not true that a general organization must compromise all extreme positions and end up finally with a careful, conservative position which by its very nature lacks sparkle and vitality? Freedom and flexibility may be maintained within a single church with a common tradition, but when organizations become too large, much of that must be sacrificed in order to preserve the structure. I have come to the conclusion that for Protestantism to aim for one organic union is a mistake.

Nor do I believe that we want any concentration of power in the Protestantism of the future. We have been very critical of our Roman Catholic brethren because of a lust for power on the part of their hierarchy. We know what happens when that power is attained, and one of the worst enemies of the Kingdom is a Church whose prelates have a monopoly of both spiritual and temporal control over a society. I do not see how any man or group of men who claim to have the power of deciding heaven or hell for their fellows can ever be anything but a threat to free men. Nor do I see how any institution which is given control over the religious life of a nation can be anything but a danger to a healthy Christianity.

In all of this it is important to make clear that we do not oppose these things because Catholics are involved in them and we happen to be Protestants. Not at all! We oppose them because all men are sinners and power corrupts all men. If Methodists attained this monopoly or Presbyterians set up a pope, the results would be the same sooner or later. We cannot believe that the religion of Jesus was ever meant to be confined and controlled in this kind of system, and merely to oppose Catholic power with Protestant power is no answer at all. We just do not believe that any church ought to have or desire that status.

In a recent volume of sermons, Dr. Frederick M. Meek referred to a cartoon showing a young man asking a father for his daughter's hand in marriage. He is saying in response to a question raised by the father, "I make a hundred and fifty bucks a week. What do you care whether I got character?" Which is to say that we easily mistake an essential matter as we strive for something which is also good. We must make clearer that when we speak of the ecumenical church, some of us at least do not mean an organized uniformity with too much power concentrated in one place.

## IV

But if we have a sense of the Holy Catholic Church, we cannot be satisfied with the present situation. What are we after, then, and what is our legitimate aim and hope for the future?

For one thing, we are after a closer co-operation and an end to our pagan competition. If my experience is any criterion, we are about at the end of this silly rivalry so far as ninety-five per cent of Protestants are concerned. In my ministry during the past few years, there has been hardly any occasion for bitterness on anyone's part because nearly all my colleagues have been men of liberal vision and honor. There has been no difficulty in working out our common projects and uniting in our common goals. There are some few churches and individuals whose spirit is that of Abraham saying to Lot: ". . . separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou take the right hand, then I will go to the left." There will always be some who regard co-operation as compromise and insist on going their own ways. But there is no sense in worrying about them because the embarrassment they cause us is a relatively minor matter, and the influence they exert is negligible.

We must strengthen our local Councils of Churches and more and more we must see their support as a legitimate claim on the budget and program of every local church. The National Council must have our whole-hearted support. This does not mean that we should place it outside the field for our criticism, but always it must be assumed that it belongs to us and deserves the kind of loyalty we give our own communions. The World Council must be kept before all our people so that they will never forget this great new creation of our time. When we see how Protestantism spoke with one great voice against the idea of a Vatican appointment by our government, it seems to indicate that we have made wonderful progress in the last few years and we may hope that a similar unity and effectiveness can be directed toward positive goals.

We must press forward toward a greater appreciation of our common fellowship. Emil Brunner in his book *The Scandal of Christianity* says: ". . . where God is thought of as a timeless idea, the ultimate aim is unity, whilst in biblical faith the aim is community."<sup>2</sup> What Brunner seems to have in mind is the creation of a unity without uniformity, and that is good. There seems to me no place now for any denomination to fail in recognizing the other churches as real churches in the sense of being Christian fellowships with every right to exist. We have differing ideas of

<sup>2</sup> Brunner, E., *The Scandal of Christianity*. The Westminster Press, 1951, p. 26.

the church, it is true, but if we happen to favor the historical tradition often-times defined as "apostolic succession," there is no reason to shun either co-operation with or recognition of those who prefer the concept of the "gathered community." There is good biblical foundation for both ideas.

Let us have done with looking down on one another's ministry. I do not mean that we should be expected to lower our own high standards of the ministry in order to become like some other group. But if any fellowship of Christians has a method of ordaining men to its ministry which satisfies them, it ill becomes any of us to refuse recognition to such a ministry. The idea that any single method of ordination is necessary for an effective ministry, is simply not borne out by experience. You will find great ministerial leadership in every church and you will find inadequate men in all communions. At the very least, we ought to have a brotherly relationship among the ministers of all denominations, and be willing to share our pulpits with one another when there is an appropriate occasion.

I still feel that the very idea of a closed communion is un-Christian. Let the invitation be to all "who do truly and earnestly repent of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbors, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways," as the Book of Common Prayer so beautifully expresses it. If any church wants to maintain further limitations, then let them in all honesty stop talking about church unity and stop trying to give the impression that they are sincere in desiring it. The freedom by which Christ sets us free seems to me to be denied utterly when the sheep of other flocks are denied food and drink in our own folds. Any honest interpretation of the New Testament will indicate that this was not characteristic of the early Christians but became an unfortunate feature of a medieval Christianity which our fathers sought to reform.

We have come a long way, and there is still a long way to go. Do you remember that incident in the life of Madame Curie when her husband was ready to give up in despair after the four hundred and eighty-seventh experiment in search of radium had failed? He said, "It can't be done; maybe in a hundred years, but not in our lifetime!" And she answered, "If it takes a hundred years it will be a pity, but I dare not do less than work for it as long as I have life." The Christian Church which is the Body of Christ is a living reality. How long it will be before the Holy Catholic Church is a complete reality, no man can say. But God seems to be moving in that direction as fast as we will work with him, and however long or short the time, we can do no less than work for it with patience, confidence, joy, and faith.

# In God We Trust?

JAMES ATKINS SHACKFORD

THE BASIC LIFE SITUATION, in any age, on any continent, and in any clime, is forever about the same. Born into a world of mystery about which he can know relatively little, man's life, as Cefi long ago reasoned to Edwin, is like to that of the sparrow that flies briefly through the banquet hall, coming out of the dark storm and going quickly into it again. Mortality is that eye-twinkling when he is within whatever security four walls and a banquet fire can give him. Everything he does there (his actions, thinking, habits, institutions) will finally take its substance from the primary assumption he makes about his universe and its uncertain storms. If he conceive of it as instinct with purpose, then his own life as a part of the whole can find meaning. If he conceive of it as meaningless accident, he will finally find no purpose in his own life. There are no other alternatives. These alternatives may be stated axiomatically thus:

## A. Value Reasoning

1. The universe embodies an eternal, intelligent, moral PURPOSE.
2. Man is an integral part of that purpose. In fact, being the highest mundane form of intelligent moral purpose we know, he plays a unique mundane part in that purpose.
3. Human life, thus, among mundane values, is the unique absolute value in terms of the meaning of the universe.

## B. No-value Reasoning

1. The universe is purposeless and amoral in essence and in operation.
2. Man is an integral part thereof.
3. Man's life, therefore, is purposeless and valueless; and morality is illusory.

Philosophically, one cannot assume a meaningless whole and retain meaning in the part.

## VALUE REASONING

One notes from the "value reasoning" that, before value can be found in life, two tremendous assumptions must be made. It appears that the positing of these, and the bridging of the gap between, has been the burden

---

JAMES ATKINS SHACKFORD, M.A., Ph.D., is Professor of English in the State College of Agriculture and Engineering at the University of North Carolina, Raleigh, North Carolina. He argues that modern thinkers, by divorcing moral ideals from their religious roots, have contributed to the moral dissolution of our society.

of man's theologizing. Is that not what was instinctively involved in the fact that, from their verb "to create" (*Scieppan*), the Anglo-Saxons made one noun, *Scieppend*, the Great Creator or Poet, God; and another, *Scop*, the little poet, or man? It affirmed that the creative experience in man was a reflection of the creative spirit of God. Hence they named both by different forms of the same word. Thus was God posited and man's vital relationship to him intuitively affirmed in the language itself. Was not the intermingling of the Greek gods with their people expressive of the oneness of God and man? A purposive God and man's unique relation to him is the meaning of the Genesis story of "man created in God's image" and of the father-son figure—though the latter also affirms that man's relationship to God partakes of the qualities of personality, as the Anglo-Saxon *Scieppend* and *Scop* perhaps implied—*persons* both.

Citing the two commandments embracing the Decalogue, Jesus reasoned similarly: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God. . . This is the first and great commandment. And the second is *like unto it* [i.e., flows from, and *only* from it], Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Not until these assumptions are made are the other commandments "comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. [For] Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law." Finally, the Ten Commandments themselves were applications of these same two assumptions. All deal with a reverencing either of God or of man, who, uniquely related to God, had thus become absolutely meaningful.

Nor until those two assumptions are made can one arrive philosophically at those morals or virtues (or the idea and the freedoms of democracy, based on the infinite value of each individual life) which humanists take for granted without those assumptions. Plato's virtues, Prudence, Fortitude, Temperance, Justice, were derived from a posited intelligence permeating the universe. And those the Christians added, Faith, Hope, and Love (of the Divine and the Divine-in-man) were obviously so derived. (Nor was faith lacking to Plato.) *Assume* a meaningless, or *fail* to assume a meaningful, universe, and the vices also become nonsensical: pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, sloth.

I am saying that whether one examines *historically* or *philosophically* these virtues of the humanists, he will find each to have been derived from religious interpretations of life. Yet we have in America almost a universal John-Deweyan educational philosophy which interprets life unreligiously (see Dewey's *Japanese Lectures*). Our educational philosophy is conse-



quently engaged actively in undercutting the values on which the democratic educational concept and government are based. As Emerson expressed it: "Democracy, freedom, has its root in the sacred truth that every man hath in him the divine Reason."<sup>1</sup> This is doubtless the reasoning of Catholicism in insisting that, without religion, there is no education. It must have been Professor Adler's meaning when he censured the professors: ". . . the most serious threat to Democracy is the positivism of the professors which dominates every aspect of modern education and is the essential corruption of modern culture."<sup>2</sup> Their positivism is represented by the "no-value" line of reasoning. Some baldly state their position as such. Others espouse instead agnosticism, a refusal to answer the question, or even to consider it.

#### NO-VALUE REASONING

But that the lack of positive affirmation becomes in fact a positive denial is clear if one but reflects that *human action is possible only to the extent that it is based upon positive assumptions; and that all men who live, act.* (Assumptions are not, of course, always obvious.) For example, a man cannot leap a fence except by virtue of many *positive* assumptions: that the fence will not grow taller after he has jumped; that the earth will remain firm and will not change its plane, position, or shape; that muscles will respond as he has learned to expect them to; that he has gauged correctly light, shadow, depth, color, distance, and height; and that he positively has the strength to jump. That is the explanation when one sees a runner approach a hurdle and refuse the leap. In some assumption he has become uncertain, *agnostic*. As Edmund Burke once expressed it, "Not to decide is to decide"—negatively. This is, in fact, a cardinal tenet of pragmatism as developed by C. S. Pierce and expounded by William James, thus: "Only when our thought about a subject has found its rest in *belief* can our *action* on the subject firmly and safely *begin*."<sup>3</sup> Insofar, then, as men act on them, all assumptions not positively made are in effect negatively made. Thus the agnostic who says "I do not know" or who refuses even to consider the question, cannot act on his not-believing or his ignoring. Since he acts, he must act on what he positively believes—must act without reference to the existence of a God.

No society will sacrifice things it believes valuable for things it holds

<sup>1</sup> *Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. E. W. Emerson and W. E. Forbes. Houghton Mifflin Co., 1910, Vol. 3, p. 390.

<sup>2</sup> Adler, M. J., in *Pragmatism and American Culture*, ed. Gail Kennedy. D. C. Heath and Co., 1950, p. 72. Cited from *Science, Philosophy and Religion: A Symposium*, 1941.

<sup>3</sup> James, W., *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Longmans, Green and Co., 1902, p. 444.

valueless, or things about whose value it is unsure. To quote Adler again: "The mere toleration of religion, which implies indifference to or denial of its claims, produces a secularized culture as much as militant atheism or Nazi nihilism."<sup>4</sup> Human life thus, in terms of *ultimate* meaning, is reduced to meaninglessness; hence standards of justice, truth, morality, ethics become nonsense and, by the very assumptions, degenerate into mere relativity. A standard of values in a valueless universe is philosophical nonsense; but it is not even good nonsense to find spiritual value in a purely physical universe! As one projects the current spectacle into history, he sees how terribly far we have come toward changing our old values to fit our new assumptions—toward nihilism.

#### THE TREND TOWARD NIHILISM

For proof of the road we have traveled, one need only look at the change in professions into which our greatest talents have gone over the past few hundred years. These changes in the public concepts of reality and value reveal the growing consequences of nihilism at work.

The greatest seventeenth-century minds dedicated themselves to religious pursuits, for the religious convictions contained the realities. Whether their religion was that of the Mathers, John Cotton, and Jonathan Edwards, or of Thomas Hooker, Anne Hutchinson, and Roger Williams, there is no question as to what, for them, ultimate reality consisted of. It was precisely these religious concepts which the eighteenth century attempted, under the impact of science, to incorporate into political instruments. Growingly preoccupied with the physical order, increasingly transferring reality from a noumenal to a phenomenal world, it produced politicians instead of religious leaders—Jefferson, Hamilton, Jay, Paine, Madison, Franklin, Freneau, Sam Adams, and many another. Yet they were *great* politicians, because they were yet close to the sources of the religious concepts and saw clearly the relationship between a faith in God and a love of man.

"I believe in one God," said Franklin. "That he ought to be worshiped. That the most acceptable service we render to him is doing good to his other children."<sup>5</sup> Among Jefferson's assumptions must have been a conscious one that, as sons of God, each was equally of infinite value and all were "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights." Only so could he say: "Can the *liberties* of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people

<sup>4</sup> Adler, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

<sup>5</sup> *Benjamin Franklin*, ed. F. L. Mott and C. E. Jorgenson; American Writers Series. American Book Company, 1936, p. 508.

that these liberties are of the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with His wrath?"<sup>6</sup>

Jefferson was talking about *all* men, for it was the regarding of any human *life as property* that he was here opposing. Can there be doubt that he saw the relationship between belief in God and a conviction in the minds of men as to the meaning of liberty? Destroy God, hence the conviction of God's gift of liberty, substitute man as "the author of liberty," and liberty becomes something man can grant or deny, an alienable rather than an inalienable right, he implies. Thus the concept of liberty disintegrates. And are we not today approaching such a concept of liberty? Jefferson's position was nowhere more clearly stated than in his belief "that to love God with all thy heart and thy neighbor as thyself is the sum of religion."<sup>7</sup> He saw the inevitability of the interdependence of these two assumptions. And Thomas Paine, damned as an atheist, was yet religious: "I believe in one God and . . . in the equality of man; and I believe that religious duties consist of doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow creatures happy."<sup>8</sup>

Did not such men, who incorporated into law those liberties we pretend to cherish, still see clearly in the eighteenth century the necessary relationship between love of man and faith in God—despite the strong trend already running, releasing men from religion into politics, which would inundate both their God and their love of man? In incorporating these "religious duties" into law, they were acting under the conviction of man's *divine* worth in a purposive universe. Would they not clearly have seen that when God is gone, man's divinity is gone and that values and laws based upon a belief in his divinity could not indefinitely withstand the corrosive which regards him as accidental molecules in a meaningless universe?

But—with the exception of certain aspects of Transcendentalism—the nineteenth and especially the twentieth centuries have been destroying the fruits of these men's faiths by destroying the faiths themselves. Money-making and scientific, or applied-scientific, pursuits measure our world. Therein lies our reality, and into that go most of our talents. In the entire process one witnesses a society passing from spiritual values to purely physical ones. The journey from one view to the other is contained in a humanist's concluding sentence to his introduction for a recent college text that aimed at "explaining" modern civilization: "What profiteth it a man if he *save*

<sup>6</sup> *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. H. A. Washington. Washington, D. C., 1854. Vol. 3, p. 404 (Query 18 from *Notes on the State of Virginia*).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 252. Letter to Doctor Benjamin Waterhouse, June 26, 1822.

<sup>8</sup> Paine, T., *The Age of Reason*. G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1890, pp. 21-2.

*his soul and lose the whole world?"* He affirms that the soul is secondary, the physical world primary. If it be true that modern society is disintegrating as a result of that very affirmation, what can he do to "explain" modern civilization?

Thus one can see nihilism working in direct proportion to our gradual withdrawal from religious assumptions. Even by the eighteenth century, Franklin revealed it in his reduction of honesty to a pragmatic test—"the best policy," rather than a virtue for which one sacrifices material concerns and even suffers. Or today in Dale Carnegie's popular book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. Is a "friend" to be cultivated in terms of his practical usefulness? Unless we escape the befuddled leadership of our nihilists, we have a preview in the Nazi, Fascist, and Communist views of human life as to where we shall ourselves inevitably arrive.

#### CONCEPTS OF TYPICAL MODERN "LEADERS"

These are serious charges against modern leaders, and require substantiation. Let us examine some of their viewpoints. Most are sincere but lost in the materialist forest. Two things have made their confusion easy. First, investing their lives elsewhere, they have an inadequate understanding of what religion is. They consequently identify it with repressive ecclesiasticism or their childhood religious concepts and, in damning either, damn religion. Second, suckled on essentially religious concepts of human values, they try to assume these independently of the philosophy from which they arose, failing to see that when they dismiss religion, they dismiss also those ideals of social justice for which they fight—that materialistic assumptions destroy nonmaterial values. As Emerson said:

What greater calamity can fall upon a nation than the loss of worship? Then all things go to decay. *Genius* leaves the *temple* to haunt the *senate* or the *market*. Literature becomes frivolous. Science is cold. The eye of youth is not lighted by hope of other worlds, and age is without honor. [*Italics added—to a sentence containing much of the history of American society!*]<sup>9</sup>

The eye of youth is not lighted! Here is an excerpt from a recent student paper of mine:

I think, personally, that nine-tenths of the mental ills and hypertensiones that exist . . . are caused, basically, by the infiltration of such so-called literature as we . . . find . . . especially the trash revolving around faith, hope, and other ideas so prevalent in the society of today.

I would like to see, and think that I would enjoy, more of that type that gives us *the cold and hard facts about religion, sex, racial discrimination*, and other subjects about which most of us have misconceptions.

<sup>9</sup> Emerson, R. W., *Nature, Addresses, and Lectures*. Houghton Mifflin Co., 1897, p. 141.

The cold and hard facts! What sort of world is his who yearns only for cold, hard facts? Coldness and hardness is all that is left him—universal properties of the physical sciences! Would it be “unscientific” to inform him that there may be any relationship between religious faith, a belief in the dignity of man, and “racial discrimination”?

Emerson was in some respects a momentary retrogression in our long antireligious drift (though in others, a part of it). His concept of religion was not as unripe as that of Albert Einstein, great man though he is:

When asking myself what religion is, I cannot think of the answer so easily. . . . I should prefer to ask what characterizes the aspirations of a person who gives me the *impression* of being religious: a person who is religiously enlightened *appears to me* to be one who has . . . liberated himself from the fetters of his selfish desires and is preoccupied with thoughts, feelings, and aspirations to which he clings because of their *super-personal value*. It seems to me that what is important is the force of this super-personal content and the depth of the conviction concerning its overpowering meaningfulness, *regardless of whether any attempt is made to unite this content with a Divine Being*. [Italics added.]<sup>10</sup>

Here is a beautiful example of philosophical confusion. The greatest values man knows—justice, mercy, love, tolerance, self-denial—are all *personal* values. But Einstein further speaks of the “overpowering meaningfulness” of a “super-personal content” without reference to the meaningfulness of the whole universe. Dismissing meaning and purpose from the whole universe, one cannot arrive at *any* values therein, personal or “super-personal.” Einstein seems not to understand what any religious man knows, that the very thing which seems to Einstein, from the outside, so important about a religious man (“the depth of *conviction* concerning . . . overpowering meaningfulness”) could not exist without its having been *derived* from a concept of Divine Being. To separate the concept of a purposive God from the conviction of meaning in the universe is to reveal how foreign to him is a philosophical understanding of meaningfulness. To fail to assume a God is to give reality completely to physical life. That is to give value to all of those selfish appetites which Einstein evidently deplors.

Further, Einstein’s concept of religion appears confused. He says:

During the youthful period of mankind’s spiritual evolution, human fantasy created gods in man’s own image, who, by the operations of their will were supposed to determine, or at any rate to influence, the phenomenal world. Man sought to alter the disposition of these gods in his own favor by means of magic and prayer. *The idea of God in the religions taught at present is a sublimation of that old conception of the gods. Its anthropomorphic character is shown, for instance, by the fact that men appeal to the Divine Being in prayers and plead for the fulfillment of their wishes*. [Italics added.]<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Einstein, A., *Out of My Later Years*. Philosophical Library, 1950, pp. 24-5.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.



His last two sentences show his inadequate concept of such a religion as Christianity, for example, whose point of view Emerson more accurately expressed when he said: "Prayer as a means to effect a private end is meanness and theft."<sup>12</sup> Can Einstein be so ignorant of the Sermon on the Mount as to say that Christianity, a religion "taught at present," is a mere sublimation of religions which sought by magic and prayer to capture the gods for one's own selfish use? Lay *not* up for *yourself* treasures upon earth, it says. Pray not like the hypocrites. Consider the lilies of the field, and ask not for, nor worry about, yourself. Look not for personal reward. Love your *enemies*. Blessed are they which are *persecuted* for righteousness' sake. Our greatest scientist says this religion teaches men to pray to God for a fulfillment of their own wills, in spite of Jesus' admonition: when you pray, pray after this manner—*thy kingdom come, not mine. Thy will be done, not mine.* Whitehead is more adequate here:

Religion is the vision of something which stands *beyond, behind, and within* the passing flux . . . *something that gives meaning to all that passes*, and yet eludes apprehension; something whose possession is the final good, and yet is beyond all reach; something which is the ultimate ideal, and the hopeless quest. . . . *Apart from it, human life is a flash of occasional enjoyments lighting up a mass of pain and misery, a bagatelle of transient experience.* [Italics added.]<sup>13</sup>

A comparison of Einstein's statement (meaning independent of creative purpose in the universe) with Whitehead's—that apart from religion, there is *no meaning*—reveals Einstein's inadequacy.

Einstein refers to the "anthropomorphic" character of man's God, and so much nonsense goes on over this word that we should make a parenthetical comment. Men can think only in terms of their experience, and any concept going *beyond* that experience must be formed *out of* that experience. Anthropomorphism of one kind or another is inevitable in all human thinking. In the same essay, having damned anthropomorphism, Einstein defines his own concept anthropomorphically: his God is a mathematical abstraction, "the grandeur of reason incarnate"—a greater Einstein! *Let us admit that our God must be anthropomorphic.* The important question really is: *shall we conceive him in terms of the highest aspirations and experiences of which personality is capable, or in less admirable terms?* Einstein has conceived God in terms far short of the highest in human experience. Mere intellect, unmotivated by the loftiest emotions, is not a really noble concept. A God of love, mercy, and justice is infinitely superior. History bears testimony to the race's superior regard for qual-

<sup>12</sup> Emerson, R. W., "Self-Reliance," in *American Poetry and Prose*, ed. Norman Foerster. Houghton Mifflin Co., 1947, p. 512.

<sup>13</sup> Whitehead, A. N., *Science and the Modern World*. The New American Library, 1948, pp. 101-02.

ities of the heart rather than of the head. Hawthorne's "Ethan Brand" examines this point, as well as the materialistic orientation from which it came.

Dewey's religious concepts are equally uninformed. He, too, thinks of religion in terms of its historical abuses or the infantilisms of primitive religions. "There is not, I think, an instance of any large idea about the world being independently generated by religion," he says.<sup>14</sup> "Apart from religion, human life is a bagatelle of transient experience," says Whitehead. Between the two lies the difference of a universe! In view of Dewey's unawareness, his reticence to define those religious values on which he so frequently calls is understandable. Yet he continues unabashedly to employ them: "the greatest *good* of the greatest number," "the *values* of intellectual, esthetic, and companionship life," "the love of truth and the love of our neighbor." His virtues clearly are the *religious* virtues of justice, temperance, fortitude, and love. But evidently he is unaware that to beg the one question about life's meaning is to deny these values.

He sometimes comes so close to realizing their source that it is remarkable he never sees it. "Every significant religious and moral teacher and prophet has asserted that the material is [only] instrumental to the good life," he says in *Liberalism and Social Action*.<sup>15</sup> Discussing "the good life" and the supersensory values it involves, he draws from "religious teachers and prophets," yet fails to see that, having dismissed religion, hence the *authority* of the religious prophets, he has dismissed the values he tries to accept from them. Again: "The problem . . . is . . . *how* conflicting claims are to be settled in the interest of the widest possible contribution to the interests of all."<sup>16</sup> But where does he get this concept of the value of *all*—or of *any*? How has he discovered and established the validity of this principle of justice to each? By accepting values as self-evident which can only be derived from a philosophy he repudiates! His concept of religion involves a God either too transcendent or too imminent to accord with his sense of reality. Continuing progressive creation is foreign to him as a *religious* concept. Seeing an early Old Testament or a pantheistic God as the only alternatives, he dismisses both, and identifies religion mainly with its ecclesiastical abuses.

William James, though assuming a nonmaterial reality, has been at one with Einstein and Dewey in the major portion of his influence. He candidly placed himself among what he called the "piecemeal supernaturalists" (as opposed to the "refined" ones), thus allowing religion to

<sup>14</sup> Dewey, J., *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy*. Excerpt in H. A. Watt and O. Cargill, *College Reader*. Prentice-Hall, 1943, p. 136.

<sup>15</sup> G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1935, p. 88.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

have pragmatic consequences in temporal life: "The further limits of our being plunge, it seems to me, into an altogether other dimension of existence from the sensible or merely 'understandable' world. Name it the mystical region, or the supernatural region, whichever you choose. . . . I feel as if we had no philosophic excuse for calling the unseen or mystical world unreal."<sup>17</sup> Yet his interpretation of religion remained at such a pragmatic level, his viewpoint so "piecemeal" and conditioned by the concurrent scientism, that even his tentative brace supporting religion was doomed to be used as a weapon with which to attack it. His orientation was largely banquet-halled; and it was his orientation, rather than his religious musings, which influenced his successors. His pragmatic method *as method* is sound—though hardly new, except in its refinements. But when he called pragmatism "a genetic theory of what is meant by truth," and said that "an idea is 'true' so long as to believe it is *profitable* for our lives,"<sup>18</sup> he made the blunder which, with his disciples, becomes fatal. Dismissing from life the religious philosophy which gives reality to nonmaterial profitableness, they make his "profitable for our lives" mean "profitable materially"; and we have arrived at nihilism. Further, the idea of accepting truth only on the basis of its practical profitableness to ourselves is a mean one; and it becomes disintegrative when reduced to material profitableness.

Nor is modern *humano-ism* different. It dismisses God from the circle of intelligent discussion, finds the universe a meaningless accident, and so, logically, dispenses with man—though, illogically, it clings to the pathetic fallacy of human values. Bertrand Russell can say that "the two qualities which I consider superlatively important are love of truth and love of our neighbor,"<sup>19</sup> yet can also say:

that man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought or feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave . . . are so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand.<sup>20</sup>

We are to love our neighbor, a minute and accidental part of a meaningless universe! And what has happened to the dignity of man, or to any ideas of values in life? The only basis for "love" under this concept is that of Theodore Dreiser: that we are all caught in a meaningless "god-damned stinking trap," all suffer, and should all sympathize—a pathetic sort of

<sup>17</sup> James, W., *op. cit.*, pp. 515-16.

<sup>18</sup> James, W., *Essays in Pragmatism*, ed. Alburey Castell. Hafner Publishing Co., 1948, pp. 151, 155.

<sup>19</sup> John Dewey quoting Bertrand Russell, *The New Republic*, Vol. 30 (April 12, 1922), p. 185.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted by J. W. N. Sullivan in *The Limitations of Science*. The New American Library, 1949, p. 133.

physical flinching for our neighbor. What a paltry "tattered coat upon a stick" is such a sensate pity-love as that. No wonder Yeats preferred sailing to Byzantium! Separate the "unalienable rights" with which a "Creator endowed" man (free conscience, speech, thought, congregation) from a positive religious conviction about life, and you destroy the roots from which each grows. Today the separation has largely been made.

Let our intellectual leaders not wonder, then, that our very President, in establishing his "loyalty board," denied the defendant the opportunity of adequate defense, of knowing or cross-examining his accuser or having information about the accusation—even though this set a nation-wide precedent contemptuous of human rights. Let them not wonder that an Attorney General, our highest law agent, can "blandly announce," despite the Supreme Court, highest judiciary, that the FBI has admittedly been engaged in illegal invasion of human privacy (wire-tapping) and that "he intends to continue violating the law against wire-tapping."<sup>21</sup> Nor should they be surprised to see wars come and battles further degenerate into power struggles between fascism, Nazism, and Communism—materialistic concepts denying all but a physical reality. Let them be unamazed if the species, having found itself valueless under their assumptions, destroys itself, when it has created sufficient of the "ultimate reality"—physical power—with which to do it. Let them not even be surprised, if they insist on clinging to brotherhood and justice, to find themselves bitterly attacked *by their own disciples*—in the name of a more materialistic national "way of life." Let them be prepared for the loss of freedom to speak, to think in terms of the evidence, to publish; prepared to understand the complete blindness of our people as to what is happening—our complete moral turpitude.

Let them be unastonished that a great part of our society has no real conviction of the worth of human personality, for they have left it no real conviction about the reality of a meaningful universe. They have left it only a sentimental attachment to "human rights" in a vacuum—while each fights for his own. And these *rights* have come to mean personal *privileges* to enjoy physical stimulations and satisfaction of appetites. I maintain that this is the world John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, Albert Einstein, and the disciples of William James, as representative of our leaders and of 300 years of science, have helped to create. James, with his belief in man's "right . . . to take a moral holiday,"<sup>22</sup> is in that respect a precursor not merely of Hitler, who took one, but of a similarly nihilistic America which more and more will take one—until she changes her assumptions.

<sup>21</sup> *The Nation*, Feb. 4, 1950, p. 99.

<sup>22</sup> *Essays in Pragmatism*, op. cit., p. 155.

## CONCLUSION

One final word. If those convictions lying at the motive-springs of action are to result in truly moral action, in liberation "from the fetters . . . of selfish desires," then those convictions will have to rest on more than the mere *intellectual* affirmations of a purposeful universe, about which we have talked so far. Such affirmation is only a hope. And whereas a man may act on hope where risk is small, he will not act on it in great dangers, at great costs, under great suffering. Nor in those multitudinous small daily acts which go insensibly to form his character will he be *motivated* by mere intellection, which will come into his mind only occasionally. To plumb the foundations of all his actions, his life, his values, there must be vastly more than an intellection—there must be a deep and moving *faith*, the most fundamental faith in his life. It must be a conviction so deep and strong that it fills up all the interstices of his consciousness, that it is always uppermost not only in his mind but in his heart and feelings. It must be so much more important than anything else in his life that it overrides all contrarieties, that it becomes the instantaneous touchstone for all of even his minutest acts, his questions, his answers, his manifold daily evaluations. Only then can his whole life become unified and uniformly motivated—not with hope but with *faith*.

Having arrived at faith, *he will discover the error of the pragmatic test for Truth, for he will not then give up his faith even if to retain it means his utter destruction.* Here, nevertheless, we have proposed to meet the pragmatist on his own grounds with his own terminology; for only thus can it now be made clear enough to effect his about-face. Let him be informed that pragmatism as a *method* is not contradictory to religion, but only pragmatism as a *measure of truth*. Let him know that there have been those before him whose indignation at social injustices was even greater than his own—so that, under religious instead of nonreligious assumptions, they could die for justice, and that it was one such pragmatist who said: "Beware of false prophets . . . ye shall know them by their fruits." And again, "let your light so shine before men that they shall see your good works." Here is the pragmatic method long before James and Dewey. But the fruits of pragmatism as truth are stinking in the nostrils of men. Soon, because of false prophets, all may be stench and no nostrils. For the world shrinks. Power avalanches. And life becomes meaningless in this physical, temporal Buchenwald of a positivistic world.



# Liberal Evangelicalism

HERBERT A. KECK

THERE ARE NOT A FEW enlightened folk in the church today who believe the sound religious position is best expressed by the phrase "Liberal Evangelicalism." We offer certain suggestions in support of that thesis. It is our conviction that the future belongs to the Evangelical faith because it is the simplest and purest type of Christianity, freed from the accretions of the past, and the most dynamic because it has escaped the clutch of the dead hand of the past.

In the phrase "Liberal Evangelicalism" both noun and adjective are important. The term Evangelical was first applied to the adherents of the Reformation. In the eighteenth century it was used to describe the clergy who preached the doctrines of the Revival. It has gradually come to be used as the opposite of "Catholic." It indicates particularly those doctrines which relate to the redemptive work of Christ and to the operations of the Holy Spirit. In South America, Romanists invariably call Protestants Evangelicals. We are not ashamed of the title, we glory in it. There is an evangelic tradition plainly traceable down the centuries—from Jesus to Paul, from Paul to Augustine, from Augustine to Luther, from Luther to Wesley, and from Wesley to D. L. Moody. Evangelicalism found expression in Lollardism, in Protestantism, in Puritanism, and in Methodism. Its message has ever been closely associated with St. Paul, the first great interpreter of Christianity.

Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of religions, philosophical religions and religions of redemption. Hinduism and Buddhism are philosophical religions. Judaism and Christianity are religions of redemption. Jesus came not in the philosophical order but in the order of holiness. He brought "good news" rather than "good views." Man's basic trouble is a misdirected will. In the Christian faith the soteriological interest is paramount. It is the Savior who is the central figure in Christian experience. The intellect defines the problem of life, but the will solves it. Yes, but

---

HERBERT A. KECK, S.T.B., D.D., recently pastor of Kenwood Methodist Church, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, now resides at Evanston, Illinois, and lectures before church groups and service clubs. He writes here of both the strength and the weakness of contemporary liberalism.

the will that solves it is a divinely re-enforced will. It is the wills of men and not their views that are the great obstacle to the gospel and are the most intractable things. What we humans need is not so much illumination as invigoration, not so much light as moral power.

The characteristic cry of the human spirit is not Goethe's—"Light, more Light," but Peter's—"Help, Lord, or I perish." We need help out from the Infinite, "God working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." We are a race of sinners, we must recognize that fact and go on from there. Prof. George H. Howison has said, "Anyone who thinks he has no sin is either an angel, a knave, or a fool."<sup>1</sup> We need to be redeemed from the unchristlikeness which is selfishness into the Christlikeness which is love.

Christianity is a religion of redemption or it is nothing. As someone has said, "the whole of the Bible was written just to show the person of the Redeemer, just to say the word redemption."<sup>2</sup> Two thousand years of Christian history bear testimony that Jesus Christ imparts to men the power to become. Through his truth and grace liars are made truthful, thieves are made honest, drunkards are made sober, and libertines are made pure. Proud and self-righteous Pharisees are turned into sweet and humble saints. And the gospel has social implications. Life is personal but it is never merely personal. All unredeemed social areas are to be brought under the law of Christ. What the gospel aims at is a divine society on earth in which men stand to God in the relation of sons and to each other in the relation of brothers. "And when we call him Savior, we call him by his name."

Unfortunately there have been types of evangelicalism that were narrow and obscurantist, opposed to the march of mind. They have been intolerant of new ideas, content with their own closed schemes of thought. As opposed to that brand of evangelicalism we suggest that the future belongs to Liberal Evangelicalism. By liberalism we mean a certain freedom of inquiry, a certain tolerance, a certain willingness to rethink one's position, a willingness to correlate one's faith with the fresh knowledge of the modern day. A liberal regards modern science, historical criticism, and philosophy as allies and not enemies. He believes that because Christ is the Light of the World we invariably find that new knowledge only strengthens the gospel message.

It is a singular fact that the growth of knowledge has done nothing to

<sup>1</sup> Buckham, J. M., *The Inner World*. Harper & Brothers, 1941, p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> McDowell, W. F., *Good Ministers of Jesus Christ*. The Abingdon Press, 1917, p. 60.

undermine the essentials of evangelicalism. Properly speaking, liberalism is not a conclusion but a method. It holds with the historical and objective method of investigation. The liberal putting aside, as nearly as possible, prejudice and prepossession, is pledged to the fearless pursuit of truth, lead where it will, cost what it may. In that sense Jesus himself would be classed as a liberal. He did not say, "I am Tradition," but "I am the Truth." He was a higher critic long before the days of Wellhausen: "Ye have heard that it was said to you of old time" thus and so, "but I say unto you" something different. His words might well be inscribed over the portals of every scientific laboratory in the world: "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." He commanded his followers to "love God with all their minds."

Christians are the last people on earth to wear intellectual blinders. There is no heresy comparable to fear of the truth. "The universe is fire-proof and it is safe to strike a match anywhere." All truth is one and all truth is God's truth. Truth in one realm is not found to contradict truth in another realm. The intellect has its rights in religion and when those rights are ignored, faith always gravitates toward superstition. An ignorant person may be a Christian, but he would be a better Christian if he were intellectually aware. "The church should always be a church for the ignorant but it should never be an ignorant church."<sup>3</sup>

Never were truer words spoken than the words of Samuel T. Coleridge, "He who begins by loving Christianity better than truth, will proceed by loving his sect better than Christianity, and end by loving himself better than all." It is a thousand pities when the Church is allied with obscurantism. That tends to alienate the intelligentsia whose power of leadership is needed on the side of the Christian cause. Nothing is more imperative at the present day than a setting forth of the Christian faith in thought-forms that are intelligible to modern-minded men and women. For we are not living now in a pre-Copernican or a pre-Darwinian world.

Liberalism's strength lies in its method—the objective method of inquiry. But we confess there have been liberals with whom we are constrained to break a lance, and that for three reasons. First, because they were marked by an excessive negativity. Sometimes it is easier to discover what liberals do not believe than what they do believe. The true function of the intellect is constructive rather than merely destructive. We are endowed with rational faculty to enable us to arrive at truth. It is possible to overwork that blessed word "tentative." A work of demoli-

<sup>3</sup> Bowne, B. P., *Studies in Christianity*. Houghton & Mifflin, 1909, p. 397.

tion may be necessary, but it is only preliminary to a positive construction. Liberalism too often has been a criticism when it should have been a crusade. The human spirit does not thrive on negatives. It craves an affirmative faith. It is not enough for religion to be intellectually respectable, it must go beyond that to moral creativity. Liberalism too often lacks drive and forward thrust. We have known religious liberals who seemingly cared more for their liberality than for their religion. Liberty is a precious possession, but liberty is not an end in itself but a means to an end. We should raise the question, liberty for what? Only when our lives are dedicated to high truths and to great tasks, only then does liberty get meaning and relevance.

Second, liberalism is too often marked by a weak sense of sin. We are fallen upon an age disposed to an easy conscience. If the Puritans made a sin of using holly and eating mince pie at Christmastide, we are prone to go to the opposite extreme, and have come not to regard anything as fraught with the seeds of death. Too often we listen to congratulatory description of men as the sons of God and too seldom do we hear "the soul that sinneth it shall surely die." Nobody trembles any more for his transgressions. We have lost the holy out of the Godhead. We suffer from the notion of an attenuated fatherhood. God is holy love, and the adjective is as important as the noun. The "good fellow" idea of God is widely prevalent. We need today that bracing word of Joseph Cook that "God cannot be an enswathing kiss without also being a consuming fire."

"With the perverse thou wilt show thyself froward" is one of the terrible brevities set down on the Scripture page. When we get rough God gets rough too. Nothing is so terrible as love when the welfare of its object is at stake. Men do not always suffer outwardly for their evil doings, but we may be sure they always suffer inwardly. Punishment does not so much come to a man as it comes in a man. He loses soul in proportion to his wickedness. "He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul." We cannot violate the integrities of the moral order and not come to personal and social mishap. The God the scientific investigator compels us to accept is more to be feared than even the Jehovah of the prophets.

It may not be wholesome always to be thinking about our misdoings, for that would tend to morbidity. But it does not follow that we should never think about them. Being always preoccupied with our health tends to make us hypochondriacs, but wise folk always pay some attention to their physical well-being. It is an erroneous notion that "evolution" takes the blackness out of sin. The truth is that it deepens and intensifies the

sense of sin. For sin is "holding up the traffic." It is treason to the ongoing purpose of the Almighty. The tragic events of recent decades should bring us to a more realistic frame of mind. We do not follow neo-orthodoxy in all its positions. Its value to us is mainly as a protest. But we must admit that it has brought us a fresh sense of the reality and inveteracy of moral evil. It has set ringing again "the great bell of Evangelical faith." Much liberalism has its roots in the Renaissance rather than the Reformation. For a generation and more the liberal pulpit has neglected the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins. We are reacting against that neglect right now, and the word "grace" is coming back into the religious vocabulary.

A third count against religious liberalism is its readiness to compromise with a false naturalism. Bliss Perry calls naturalism the cult of science. It should be remarked that there is a true naturalism and there is a false naturalism. The naturalistic explanation of things does not necessarily preclude the spiritual explanation of things. The first is phenomenal, the second is metaphysical. The first has to do with the "how" of things, the second has to do with the "what" and the "why" of things. The two explanations are entirely compatible. A false naturalism professes to account for just about everything without bringing God into the picture. A false naturalism obscures and diminishes the gospel. Richard Niebuhr points that out strongly in his recent book, *Christ and Culture*. The assumptions of modern secular culture are not the assumptions of the Christian gospel. As someone has put it, "The New Testament is supernaturalistic; scientific culture is dogmatically naturalistic; the New Testament is steadily other-worldly, scientific culture has been painfully this-worldly. Scientific naturalism empties such great New Testament ideas as incarnation, redemption, resurrection and descent of the Spirit of their essential meaning and creative power."

The church of the New Testament cannot be explained on purely naturalistic grounds without doing violence to the New Testament record and to historic Christian experience. Jesus of Nazareth is a unique person, and it is natural that a unique person should do unique things. The deeds of Jesus are congruous with his character and mission. Liberals, by compromising with a false naturalism, have emasculated the gospel. They have given away their own case. Nothing is more needed than a clarification of Christian thought as to the relation between the natural and the spiritual. Properly understood, the two are not antithetical but interpenetrate. An event in the physical order is natural in the way in which it occurs but supernatural in its causality. Nature is not a mechanism, but



an organism instinct throughout with Divine life. Much of the prejudice against the so-called miraculous is a hang-over from early nineteenth-century deism. God is immanent in the ongoing of the physical universe. The laws of nature are the thought of God, and the forces of nature are the will of God. Evolution is just a method of divine procedure.

The undivineness of the natural and the unnaturalness of the divine is a popular heresy which has wrought mischievously against the interests of spiritual religion. The repugnance of many people toward the supernatural is due to the false notion that the supernatural breaks into the order of nature from without and contravenes natural law. That appears to do violence to the uniformity of nature. The answer to that notion is the immanent theory of nature. Nature is the sphere of the immanent activity of God. It is not a closed system, its energies and laws are not ultimate realities but modes of the divine activity—the form of God's self-expression. Properly understood, the natural involves the supernatural and the supernatural implies the natural. They are not mutually exclusive; they are simply different points of view from which the ceaseless Divine activity in the world may be considered. Because the term "supernatural" carries unfortunate connotations to the popular mind, it might be well to substitute for it the word "spiritual." "Supernatural" in any event is not a scriptural term.

Liberalism is temporarily in the doldrums. Authoritarianism is having its innings, but the tide will turn. There are those who seek to disparage the libertarian position by talking about "tired liberals." Let us not be deceived, liberalism is neither dead nor dying. It has much to its credit in the past and holds much promise for the future. We think of liberalism as a leaven. It is a ferment rather than a movement. There is no future for any form of Christianity that blocks the path of intellectual progress. As the gospel once spoke to the world through Greek philosophy, so today it is speaking to the world through the assured findings of modern science. We may be sure that every scientific discovery is at once a religious revelation. Instead of shrinking from such discoveries we should baptize them into Christ.

It is the arch heresy that inspiration has ceased. God has yet more light and truth to break forth out of his Word and out of his world. Wisdom would seem to lie in avoiding both Scylla and Charybdis—an arid rationalism on the one hand and an acrid conservatism on the other hand. Liberalism is the true mediating position. We should be both fearless and reverent. A great teacher set in simple phrase the true spirit when he wrote,

"We are not afraid to open our eyes in the presence of nature, nor ashamed to close our eyes in the presence of God." What liberalism needs now is to profit by its mistakes, reform its lines and march forward to fresh conquests under the guidance of the Spirit of Truth. Christ does not wave to us from the past, he beckons us from the future. "Behold he goeth before you." The best verse in a well-known hymn sounds the true note for Liberal Evangelicalism:

Crown Him the Lord of Truth,  
The past He leaves behind,  
And reigns in his eternal youth  
And rules the honest mind.

## Book Reviews

Culture and Faith. By RICHARD KRONER. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951. xvi-278 pp. \$5.00.

### I

Professor Kroner refers to the system put forth in his most recent book as a "critical philosophy." "Critical philosophy" seeks to mediate between the respective claims of secular thought and sacred theology. By restricting the universal ambitions of both philosophy and theology, "critical philosophy" avoids, on the one hand, the error of traditional thought which held that philosophy could of itself arrive at ultimate truth, and on the other hand, the error of a theology which would use revelation to supplement philosophy by filling the gap of ignorance which limits human knowledge. "The Christian message," he tells us, "makes such unifying and totalitarian thought impossible . . . the elements of natural knowledge and divine inspiration are too divergent to be made links of one great system" (p. 7). "Metaphysical theologies" and "theological metaphysics," past and present, err in denying this.

This seeming agreement with the Barthian position, however, does not place Kroner among the Barthian theologians; for they, too, by disregarding the function of philosophic thought, fail to solve the problem of how the sacred and the secular are related to each other. "A new synthesis must be achieved . . . between man's own effort to civilize himself, in all its ramifications, and God's intention and guidance" (pp. xi-xii).

"*Experience originates, faith crowns, culture*" (p. xii). This is the thesis of Kroner's book. Developing it, he first investigates the roots of culture in experience. Kroner does not use the word "experience" in the narrow sense, as the source of that knowledge which is fulfilled in science; scientific experience is itself embedded in a wider and fuller stream which always has a personal reference and thus ultimately is subjective. From this starting point Kroner finds experience presenting antinomies, contradictions which can neither be avoided nor solved.

The basic antinomy is that of ego and world: man is what he is because of the way in which he is a focus from which all the lines of the world proceed and toward which they all return, but man is also what he is because of the way in which he is acted upon and reacts in the world. From these two divergent poles of his nature develop the other antinomies of experience: individuality and universality, oneness and manifoldness, freedom and necessity, time and eternity. These antinomies, formulated by thought out of the perplexities and anxieties of life, man tries to overcome by the labor of civilization. "Culture is man's adventure, and man is an adventurer because he is unsettled and longs for an indefinite good which would satisfy his supreme need, the need to solve the antinomies of experience" (p. 66).

### II

In the second part of his discussion Kroner develops the system of cultural realms, each of which is conceived as a specific solution of the principal contradictions of experience. None of these succeeds, however, because within secularism each realm claims autonomy, with the result that the inner unity of culture is today endangered. Proceeding autonomously, science oversteps its limits and falls into the trap of scientism, art into that of estheticism, politics into totalitarianism, morality into moralism, phi-

losophy into absolutism, and so on. Only a philosophy of faith can make good the deficiencies of the solutions sought through culture.

Before indicating the outlines of such a philosophy Kroner analyzes the structure and mutual relationships of the realms of culture. He avoids the error, common to many contemporary thinkers, of reducing a philosophy of culture to a philosophy of history. Instead of applying the methods and categories of a particular cultural realm to the problems of philosophy, he makes these methods and categories the object of his inquiry and seeks to understand the special task and contribution of each of the several cultural realms.

To illustrate: two of the cultural realms (science and art) adopt a cognitive and contemplative approach; others (politics, morality, religion) adopt a volitional approach. As between science and art, science *subordinates* particular events to patterns of general rules and, as a consequence, its results are abstract and bear no relation to the reality of immediate experience. Art *co-ordinates* the sensuous and the intellectual and, as a consequence, its results are concrete and convey a sense of immediacy. Furthermore, though science through mathematics achieves its task by reconciling oneness and manifoldness, individuality and universality (this is its contribution to the task of culture), it does not solve the basic antinomy of ego and world; indeed, it cannot, insofar as it eliminates the ego from its world-contemplation. In contrast, the world of the artist is the world of the human self in all dimensions of experience; man is the real focus of artistic imagination.

In relation to the antinomies, then, the method of co-ordination is superior to that of subordination, and the artistic solution, though not absolute, is definitely superior to that of science. But art is also limited because its approach is contemplative and contemplation can never absolutely reconcile world and art. It may even generate new tensions by creating a split between the actual and the imaginative worlds; the contradictions of experience are felt even more by the sensitive lover of art than by others. These contradictions can be transcended only in an actual way. This is the task of politics, morality, and ultimately, of religion—the spheres of “active culture.”

On the level of action, politics corresponds with science at the level of contemplation; both follow the same method of subordination and impersonality. The political community is not an inner relationship among individuals but is concerned only with “aims and ends . . . which can be attained by the subordination of the individuals as particular citizens to the general will of the state” (p. 149). The result is that the state falls short in its approach to the reconciliation of the polarities of experience. Over against his membership in a political community, man is an ego, a self, a private person. It is in this inner sanctuary of the self that *morality* operates, seeking to unify the self with itself as well as with the community of selves. The state cannot hope to make its citizens morally good, but only to make their conduct legally correct. The fact is that the state is dependent upon morality, inasmuch as it cannot be a good state unless its members are moral.

Similarly, Kroner states, morality is as necessary in other cultural activities: an intellectual conscience is required of the scientist even as an esthetic conscience is required of the artist. Morality, then, is the final limit of culture. However, analysis discloses that morality, too, fails to reconcile ego and world; tensions still remain. Indeed, as the phenomenon of guilt demonstrates, morality like art only stresses and strengthens the antinomies of experience. The conclusion follows: limited to the cultural level man is forever frustrated, all cultural activity must forever generate new inner contradictions.

## III

Can a philosophy of faith make good the deficiencies of cultural activity? Kroner maintains it can. In the third section of his book he seeks to construct a bridge from the understanding of culture to the understanding of faith. As indicated earlier in this review, Kroner finds an inevitable antagonism between secular philosophy and Christian faith. Nevertheless, although philosophy can never engender faith, it may, Kroner states, aid in removing some intellectual and cultural obstacles which hinder man's reception of and belief in the message of God. Furthermore, if the task of philosophy is the self-comprehension of man, "then it is its . . . duty to comprehend faith too, since faith is an attitude of man . . . though an attitude toward something that transcends the horizon of man's comprehension" (p. 268). It is in this sense that he finds the content of biblical faith philosophically suggestive.

The mediating link between a philosophy of faith and Christian theology is *mystical experience*. "Mystical experience concerns the original unity of world and ego which are disunited in secular experience and so remain, despite all cultural attempts to reunite them" (p. 194). This experience cannot be expressed except by a special kind of imaginative language which all religions exhibit. According to Kroner, other religions seek to resolve the self-contradiction of man's life on a contemplative level, whereas biblical faith belongs to the active sphere of life—it is a "practical" and not a theoretical solution. In biblical faith, "God's revelation . . . turns first to man's will and heart, and imagination is but the instrument through which God's word is received. . . . Pagan religions are pagan because this true order of rank is not rightly respected" (pp. 203-204).

Kroner's treatment of the ways in which biblical faith "solves" the ultimate task of culture parallels the discussions of faith and secular philosophy found in the writings of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich. Faith, culminating in the forgiving love of God, "solves" the antinomies of experience because God is known as their supreme source. The forgiving love of God closes the gap between man and God and thereby all gaps which divide the human self. It leaves behind the whole sphere in which conflicts and contradictions prevail, and opens up a new level in which the oppositions are replaced by a transrational co-ordination of the polarities within the ego and between self and self. In the realm of action love corresponds to beauty in the realm of contemplation; in the community of love alone the principle of subordination is transcended by the principle of co-ordination. "Only through love does faith become the summit of all other levels and realms of human life and activity. Only through love does faith overshadow all cultural achievements, real and potential" (p. 224).

In so interpreting events in the light of spiritual devotion to a God of love, however, faith paradoxically produces new tensions. These should not be confused with the original antinomies of experience; the Christian "solution" is still a "solution" of the antinomy between world and ego, in spite of the fact that Christian faith generates new tensions between itself and civilization. The very triumph of faith would seem to make civilization, as such, questionable. When God reveals himself, does not man, together with all his works and institutions, fade into nothingness? Kroner acknowledges this, and states that although faith articulates mystical experience "there is and remains a tension between secular and mystical experience . . . at least on the level of Christianity" (p. 242).

This is the problem to which his entire book is addressed. The merely temporal



solution can never match the eternal; this is why faith judges culture even as it consummates it. "On the other hand, faith in God produces no substitute for science, art, state, and law; culture is indispensable as long as man remains imperfect and continues to live under historical circumstances" (p. 243). When the "solution" of faith disregards the tension and tries to overpower secularity altogether, the suppressed power encroaches upon the realm of faith, as happened during the centuries in which ecclesiastical authority and power seemed most victorious. This may be expressed either as the conflict between morality and faith (man belongs to the realm of civil and moral action, yet loyalty to God transcends all social relations); or as the opposition of dogma and faith (dogma is necessary to defend faith against attack by secular science and theory, yet dogma adulterates faith by exchanging the higher level of imagination for the lower level of intellection and thus subtly secularizes the mystical); or, as already suggested, as the contrast between philosophy and faith (thought is an enterprise of the human mind and is based on logic, whereas faith is the response to the divine call and is based on mystical experience and religious prophecy). In any case tensions remain as long as men live in time.

And yet, because the man of faith has "faith unlimited" (the heading Kroner gives his closing section) in the living God who reigns over the temporal world, he is led beyond the limits of humanity and time and in a mysterious way shares the eternal joy of heaven. "Faith articulates the 'eternal Yes' of life, which transcends the sphere in which every Yes is challenged by a hostile and opposing No. It articulates the absolute oneness which can never be thought out. It is deeper than thought because it is not limited by the oppositions necessary to make thought move. . . . Faith is therefore all-embracing and all-penetrating. It is not limited by the boundaries of time and history or of knowledge and human power. It can 'move mountains'; it can, what is more, move the heart of God" (pp. 274-275).

#### IV

The foregoing paragraphs have been an attempt to indicate the structure of Professor Kroner's "critical philosophy." Such an "outline" was chosen as preferable to extended comment, adverse or laudatory, about a work as significant as this. The book is not easy to read, so tightly knit is it in organization and often couched in the language of German idealism. Indeed, it calls for rereading several times if one is to appreciate the interlocking of the different parts of the system presented. Few contemporary volumes, however, are more worthy of being reread. Presenting first-rate philosophical abstraction and an equally impressive sensitivity to the totality of problems, sociological and psychological as well as philosophic and theological, confronting modern man, Professor Kroner's book gives a resounding and heartening answer to the question posed in an earlier number of this quarterly (Spring, 1951) regarding the prospects for a Christian philosophy in our age.

CYRIL K. GLOYN

Professor of Philosophy, Occidental College, Los Angeles, California.

**Types of Religious Experience: Christian and Non-Christian.** By JOACHIM WACH. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951. xvi-275 pp. \$3.50.

The scholarly and liberal Joachim Wach is a pioneer in the field of sociology of religion. In his present work the sociological aspect is less conspicuous than in his previous German and English writings. In fact, the emphasis is largely philosophical,

rarely theological in the restricted sense of the word. That is, Wach here is more concerned to evaluate the religious truth in beliefs based on various types of experience than he is to describe their sociological or psychological aspects.

The title of the book is somewhat misleading, for two reasons. It suggests a comparison with James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*, although the two works are really not comparable at all. It also suggests that a "typology," or classification of types, of religious experience will be offered, but this expectation is disappointed, although casual reference to types is made on pp. 138-139 (incidentally, a defect of the book is an index confined to proper names). The book is a collection of essays, for which a more suitable title would be "Man's Religious Heritage," in accord with Wach's goal of "a deeper understanding of the religious heritage of West and East." While opposed to the short cuts of mere eclecticism, Wach seeks generously for "universals in religion." He has little sympathy with claims to exclusive knowledge of God in any religion. He presents a well-documented plea for interfaith understanding and appreciation.

Despite a lack of organic structure, the book provides many new facts and fresh insights. The most informing chapters for the reader who wants to understand Wach's point of view are those on "The Place of the History of Religions in the Study of Theology," on Caspar Schwenckfeld (in which Wach shows himself quite free from Lutheran bias), and on Rudolf Otto (to whom he pays high tribute).

He finds both West and East defective in treatment of the idea of man, but he does not mention Eduardo Nicol's recent contribution (in Mexico) to our knowledge of the Greek idea of man.

Nowhere in the book is there manifested any deep sympathy with neo-orthodoxy. Wach, it is true, does show understanding and appreciation of Søren Kierkegaard, especially in the chapter on Schwenckfeld. But his appreciation is critical; he does not admire Kierkegaard for his most extravagant excesses. He remains definitely outside the ranks of the Kierkegaard-adorers, some of whom seem to test the New Testament by Kierkegaard rather than the reverse. Wach's less frequent mentions of Barth are even less appreciative; his preference for Otto over Barth is quite evident.

The chapter on Rudolf Otto is a thumbnail picture of a man whom Dr. Wach knew intimately and admired highly, both as saint and as scholar. Otto was acquainted with the Orient at firsthand as well as with the Occident. In the Orient he contracted a disease which permanently sapped his health. He was a deeply religious rationalist—a mystic who did not want to be called a mystic. He was also a member of the Prussian diet. He was a Christian who appreciated both the Hindu and the Moslem faiths. He was a Kantian who transcended Kant by what he learned from Fries, Schleiermacher, Ritschl, and Troeltsch, and whose *Idea of the Holy* revealed the numerous dimensions of religion. He was a universal soul, akin to Wach himself, and moving in a liberal atmosphere, today less popular than that of neo-orthodoxy.

Wach includes in his beautiful chapter on Otto an appreciation of Otto's plan for a "Religious League of Mankind," which goes far beyond the ecumenical notion of a union of Protestants. Dr. Wach, however, omits mention of Otto's visits to Boston University and other American institutions in about 1924 and again later, during which he revealed plans for the practice of social Christianity in another area. He planned to organize a group of Ph.D.'s in religion, Bible, philosophy, eco-

nomics, and sociology, who would dedicate themselves to the labor movement. After securing their degrees, they were to start in as common laborers in mines and industry, win the confidence of their fellow workers, and become labor leaders. How the project fared is not known, but it sheds new light on the many-sided character of Otto.

One other item in the book under review should be noted. Dr. Wach is one of the relatively few foreign scholars who have been willing and able to learn much from an American. He has been discriminating in his choice; he pays high tribute to William Ernest Hocking, a great thinker and a great soul, who has not received the attention from his fellow Americans that his profound insights deserve. Wach views Hocking as solving in an original way problems raised by Bishop Söderblom. He especially praises the work of Hocking which has been most violently criticized by our conservatives, namely, *Living Religions and a World Faith*. The idea which Wach values most highly is Hocking's opposition "to any concept of religion which limits to a single source the channels through which the truth becomes available" and his insistence that "revelation should not be thought of as opposed to insight or reason." It is clear that Wach has no sympathy with contemporary irrationalism, and that he welcomes Hocking's allegiance to the cause of reason.

Wach's cosmopolitanism is further evidenced by his tribute to Professor E. L. Wenger of Serampore College, Bengal, who has written on "The Problem of Truth in Religion." Like Söderblom and Hocking, he lays stress on God's universal and progressive self-revealing activity. In short, for Wenger, God is "everywhere personally active." Wach allies himself with the world-wide forces opposed to Christian exclusiveness and isolationism, and acknowledges with Wenger, "the early preparatory revelation of God in India."

*Types of Religious Experience* is, to sum up, a much more than sociological book by a great sociologist. It is a broadly informing and significant work that challenges many of today's popular currents of thought, but never in a merely contentious spirit. Its positions are based on the evidence of experience, and are firmly argued, but never with rancor. Although not a systematic whole, it is pervaded by a unity of spirit which breathes from every page.

EDGAR SHEFFIELD BRIGHTMAN

Professor of Philosophy, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts.

**Way to Wisdom. An Introduction to Philosophy.** By KARL JASPERS. Translated from the German by Ralph Manheim. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951. v-208 pp. \$3.00.

*Ed. Note: We have secured two reviews of this significant book, from differing points of view.*

# I

Karl Jaspers is a contemporary philosopher who has been taken more seriously by the theologians than by the philosophers. The philosophers do not generally care for him, for he is at loggerheads with a long-standing passion among them to be scientific. Science in the twentieth century, however, is synonymous with the scientific method, and the scientific method is not particularly productive of "wisdom." To subsume all the concerns of life under the same categories that elucidate the world of nature is such a sacrifice of both depth and clarity, Jaspers believes, that the "scientific" philosophies are rapidly killing the spirit of philosophy. It is chiefly Jaspers'

philosophical alternatives to the scientific pretensions of modern culture that appeal to the theologians. Yet Jaspers loses no love on theologians. He regards them as dull, defensive, and dogmatic. They are the mouthpieces of power-wielding churches and "pious Bible readers." This implicit authoritarianism is the very antithesis of philosophy. (See Chapter X, "The Independent Philosopher" and Appendix I, "Philosophy and Science.") Jaspers himself prefers to live somewhere *between* "a revealed God" and "a godless here and now" (p. 14).

Philosophy is a "way to wisdom" which neither the sciences nor the religions supersede. That is the thesis of this little volume of twelve philosophical lectures. One is startled to realize that the author delivered these lectures as a series of radio broadcasts from Basel, Switzerland. (He is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Basel.) While one would scarcely expect philosophical discussions to win a Hooper rating, one would wish for every philosopher the responsibility of reducing his thoughts to some such minimum vehicle as Jaspers has achieved here. Americans who have found continental thinking too painful will be pleased to discover that Jaspers is as deep as A. N. Whitehead and as lucid as Bertrand Russell.

But Jaspers is an *existential* philosopher. The inference would seem to be that the way of wisdom is the way of existential philosophy, and that this "introduction to philosophy" is an introduction to Jaspers' brand of existentialism. After reading this little book one will be quite sure that if this be existentialism, far from being a fad, it is a serious and thoroughgoing world view. It is a vital development in the history of philosophy which nevertheless maintains continuity with the perennial philosophy. Lest the reader miss seeing this point from the fact that Jaspers orients everything he says to the noblest traditions, his final lecture is devoted to "The History of Philosophy," and an instructive essay on how to read philosophy is appended.

The history of philosophy, however, is not the source of philosophy. Wonder, doubt, and the sense of despair—these existential concerns of man by which Plato, Descartes, and the Stoics led philosophy in its search for insight, certainty, and authenticity are the real sources. In that sense philosophy has always been existential. Without one other element, however, philosophy flirts with frenzy. Jaspers was a psychiatrist just long enough, a student of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche just thoroughly enough, and acquainted with the Hebrew prophets just intimately enough to know the philosophically important ingredients of lucidity and profundity that accompany frenzy. But without the kind of clarity and communicability long associated with Greek philosophy and most highly achieved in modern times by Kant (*sic*), existential frenzy is philosophical madness. Philosophy must make sense. The synthesizing of Kant to Kierkegaard, that is, of rational communication to existential ecstasy, is the theme of Jaspers' earlier *Vernunft und Existenz* (1935).

After Chapters I ("What Is Philosophy?") and II ("Sources of Philosophy") have tied Jaspers' existentialism to regular philosophical procedures, Chapter III introduces one of his more opaque verbal novelties, "The Comprehensive." This chapter contains a double announcement. First, philosophy must be metaphysical and deal with the common denominator of being, "the Comprehensive." Second, philosophy must not disfigure being in the process of penetrating it rationally, whether the object be God, the self, or the world. "The Idea of God" (Chapter IV) unfolds the biblical doctrine of creation into philosophy: as the Source, God cannot be the object of knowledge. He is the presupposition. "To live by God does not mean to base oneself on calculable knowledge but to live as though we staked our existence on the

assumption that God is" (p. 50). Here Kierkegaardian passion and Kantian agnosticism teeter together. The Self (Chapter VI, "Man") reveals an "unconditional imperative" (Chapter V), a demand so absolute, one does not build his life by it but upon it; one does not know it, he accepts it, that is, he chooses or decides about it. "Man is fundamentally more than he can know about himself" (p. 63). This is his freedom, a freedom to discover through existing what he cannot know through simply thinking, that "the more authentically free a man is, the greater his certainty of God" (p. 65). Even one's interpretive encounter with "the world" (Chapter VII) will teach one that "the universe is not self-contained. It cannot be explained out of itself" (p. 76). All this, then, adds up to "Faith" (Chapter VIII)—a philosophical faith not to be confused with religious faith. (The original title of Jaspers' *Perennial Scope of Philosophy* is *Die philosophische Glaube*, 1948.) Philosophical faith is a nonknowledge superior to both science and religion, for it enlightens without destroying freedom. Chapter IX then throws this perspective on "the History of Man" and Chapter XI is a winsome invitation to "the philosophical life."

Sartre has called Jaspers a Catholic, by which he seems to mean Jaspers says more about God than philosophy really can tell. A young German theologian has recently called Jaspers a Hebrew who can get along quite well without the Christian revelation. A philosopher is in a precarious position when it comes to Christianity. If he affirms God, it is too much for philosophers. If he does not affirm Christ, it is too little for theologians. One might regard Jaspers as the high priest of existentialism, a role which has its good and its bad side. He assumes the splendidly mediatorial role of communicating the richness of existentialism widely. At the same time, he falls short of the prophetism of less theistic existentialists who are philosophically more critical, hence theologically more expectant.

CARL MICHALSON

Associate Professor, Theology and Philosophy of Religion, Drew Theological Seminary, Madison, New Jersey.

## II

*Way to Wisdom* is a succinct and impressive version of the main points of Jaspers' existential philosophy in a readable, almost popular form. This philosophy holds a middle ground between the outright religious (Buber and Marcel) and the outright irreligious (Heidegger and Sartre) wing of modern existentialism. Jaspers has shifted steadily toward a trend of thought which is tinged by what he calls "philosophic faith." While he originally (in his three-volume system, *Philosophie*, 1932) took his stand on existence proper, i.e., on man's autonomous or independent consciousness, he now stresses man's dependence upon a power that transcends his own consciousness as well as the world in which man lives.

Still he maintains that the philosopher is independent of any definite religion; again he protests the infringement of any outer authority upon his thoughts. However, he emphasizes his faith in God and insists that man is rooted in this transcendent ground. "Man has a kind of home in the absolute. He cannot evade it. In that home he must live" (p. 80). There is a false and a true "enlightenment." The false one makes man believe "that he can know by himself alone and that he can act on the basis of his knowledge alone, as though the individual were everything" (p. 89). True enlightenment, on the other hand, rests not only upon man's own understanding,



but takes into account the "source and truth of the biblical religion as such, for these are alive in true enlightenment, they are elucidated by philosophy, which helps to preserve them for humanity in the new technological world" (p. 92).

In spite of this and similar assurances the character of his "philosophic faith" is not quite unambiguous. One can never be certain in what sense and to what extent Jaspers identifies this faith with the biblical truth which he pretends to protect and to preserve. The relation between reason and revelation, between secular and sacred elements within his philosophy is nowhere thoroughly defined or expounded, either in this or in any other of his numerous and voluminous books. One does not even clearly learn what he means when he speaks about the "certainty of God" (p. 41); upon what authority such a certainty is based; what kind of God it is to whom he appeals; and what kind of existence he ascribes to his God.

Sometimes he refers to biblical passages, especially taken from the Old Testament (he never refers to Christ, I believe), and seems to identify his "philosophic" faith with that of those passages. But he also tries to conceive "the idea of God" in terms of speculative contemplation, as when he calls God "reality absolute" or "authentic reality" or the "comprehensive" or "godhead" or "transcendence" (this term was already used in his first system). Some of these terms point to a personal, some to an impersonal God. Thus the very center of his philosophic faith is vague, so vague indeed that one wonders why he calls this faith "philosophic" or even whether he is in earnest when he so calls it.

In fact, Jaspers takes his faith from biblical sources, but he does not like to admit this, because he strives after absolute "independence" (one chapter has the title, "The Independent Philosopher"). There is very little serious and profound thought dedicated to the time-honored central problem of all metaphysics, the problem of reality absolute. Jaspers is a kind of philosophic preacher, i.e., a philosopher who would like to be a preacher but is frustrated because he is unwilling to give up philosophy, and a preacher who would like to be a philosopher at the same time, but is in turn frustrated because he replaces true thinking by pseudo-religious assertions and pseudo-mystical oracles.

If this verdict seems too harsh, I will substantiate it by some quotations. "Long before and far outside the world of biblical revelation there was certainty as to the reality of the godhead. And within the world of the Christian West many men have derived certainty of God without the guarantee of revelation" (p. 41). "Instead of the knowledge of God which is unattainable we gain through philosophy a comprehensive consciousness of God" (p. 46). "The climax and goal of our life is the point at which we ascertain authentic reality, that is, God" (p. 47). "Reflection on God clarifies our faith" (p. 50). I for one cannot see how sentences like these do really "clarify" my faith. They only demonstrate to me that there is no philosophic faith, and that the attempt to create such a faith rests upon deep confusion and self-deception.

Jaspers is indeed a "comprehensive" philosopher, i.e., a philosopher who wishes to embrace all human history in all its manifestations and ramifications: faith and thought, science and art, experience and speculation. He is, in fact, a highly cultivated and learned personality. The world-comprising, all-penetrating capacity of mind which distinguishes some great Germans like Goethe and Hegel seem to be exemplary to him. There is a real kinship between him and them; but alas! he is neither a Goethe nor a Hegel. And even a Hegel could not avoid ambiguity, because he wanted to reconcile everything to everything. Jaspers is, after all, a typically syncretistic thinker, so that even his "existential" note is encumbered by his basic Kantianism.

It is ironical indeed that he who boasts so much of "authenticity" as the highest value, has little authenticity in his own thoughts.

In a chapter on "The History of Man" Jaspers repeats another kind of "philosophic faith" which he proclaimed in a book entitled *On the Origin and End of History* (1949). Here he asserts that mankind reached its zenith and discovered all important ideas between 800 and 200 B.C. This period he calls the "axis in history." This, I think, highly arbitrary conviction again confirms the fact that Jaspers is inclined to rank the Old Testament prophets far above Christ, who did not happen to live and to die within the confines of the "axial" epoch. And yet, according to Jaspers, "the man with whom we live today came into being" in that happy epoch. Jaspers mentions in this context, besides Chinese and Indian sources, Elijah, the two Isaiahs, Jeremiah, and some Greek thinkers—strangely enough not Socrates, the most "existential" of them all.

The philosophy of Jaspers comprises within itself the most characteristic leanings and likings of our present moment in history. Although it is less original and less outspoken than many other schemes of a cognate cast of mind, yet it represents this moment only the more fully and will therefore appeal to many people. Its weakness is also its strength. Its vagueness allows its completeness. Thus it expresses graphically the multiplex character of the personality of its author, and in this sense it is genuinely "existential."

RICHARD KRONER

Professor of Philosophy of Religion, Union Theological Seminary, New York City.

**The Christian Understanding of God.** By NELS F. S. FERRÉ. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951. ix-277 pp. \$3.75.

# I

This volume is the fourth in Dr. Ferré's series on the Christian faith. It is particularly concerned with the relation between the historic doctrine of God and modern process philosophy, being thus an American expression of what (in a more limited doctrinal area) the British theologian Father Thornton attempted a few years ago in *The Incarnate Lord*. It is in the first half of the volume, dealing with the Nature of God, that this attempt is most explicitly made. The second half, dealing with the Work of God, is much more specifically biblical in its orientation. Here Ferré seems to shift gears, and in part abandons the rigorous philosophical approach of the early chapters in favor of a more "confessional" type of theology. This is probably inevitable, and it indicates that in areas where one is existentially involved, philosophic detachment is not fully possible. The first half of the book is intensely difficult reading unless one is well versed in philosophy; the second half presents less difficulties for the reader with an average theological background.

In this connection one comment is surely in order. In earlier volumes in Dr. Ferré's series, many readers had difficulties with his written style, which was characterized by long cumbrous sentences. Their difficulty was compounded by the constant reiteration of such terms as "the reflexive superspective," "the compossible," and so on. As far as the present reviewer is concerned, both of these difficulties have disappeared in the present volume. The difficulties of understanding, to whatever extent they are present, are due to the very difficult nature of the subject matter, not to Dr. Ferré. It is not possible to discuss the nature of God, of time

and eternity, in easy platitudes. A slight unevenness of tempo still remains; there is a sudden rash of jokes on pp. 75f, and a somewhat irrelevant discussion of the possibility that Jesus was a German on p. 191. (There is also one unfortunate misprint in a quotation from Aquinas on p. 258, note 38, which should read "Therefore His Essence is His Existence.") But these are minor exceptions, and Dr. Ferré is to be commended for his gains in clarity. If one hope could be voiced with regard to later books in this series, it would be the abandonment by the author of the pronoun "we" when referring to himself; this becomes confusing since on many occasions it is also used to refer to the author-and-his-readers, or to Christians in general.

Throughout the book there is a courageous freshness of approach. Dr. Ferré does not feel bound to accept something because it has been a traditional belief since the early Fathers or because it seems conventional and orthodox. There is scarcely a theologian of note who is not at some point challenged vigorously; there is scarcely a traditionally held doctrine which is not opened up in a creative way for re-examination. What emerges, therefore, is a new position difficult to assess.

## II

A few indications must suffice of ways in which Ferré opens up new areas for thought and discussion. In dealing with the Nature of God, for example, Ferré disagrees both with Christian traditionalists who have thought of God as abstract being, and with modern process philosophy which redefines the notion of God in terms of becoming. The only adequate way to see the proper relationship of being and becoming is in terms of the norm of Christian love or *agape*, which is central to all of Ferré's theology. His main point in this section is that "only by becoming can being become what it is." (p. 23, etc.) Naturalism, process philosophy and traditional Christianity are all indicted because of their defective understanding of the implications of this statement.

In the discussion of "Love as personality," this reviewer finds most difficulty in the conception that God himself is self-transcending, in that "He creates new realities out of the infinite nothing." (p. 32) Is it possible to talk of the "self-transcendence of God" as though there were something "beyond God" which he had not already, in principle at least, encompassed by his creative love? The other aspects of personality as Ferré applies them to God (self-consciousness, self-direction, creative purpose, desire to perpetuate oneself, and the seeking of community) are not so difficult to relate to God, though one may ask whether God should be made to conform to our previously established notions of personality, rather than forcing us to revise our notions of personality as we truly come to know him. Ferré continues with a discussion which boldly affirms that God both *is* and *has* a body (p. 35ff), rescuing this notion from the usual charge of "crude anthropomorphism."

In his discussion of "God and the World," Ferré repudiates among other things the notion of God as "wholly other," and underlines the importance of identity or continuity between God and the world. There is a strong emphasis through these pages on God's imminence in creation. While maintaining that the basic relation of God to the world is one of *identity*, Ferré guards himself at the end of his chapter by two qualifications: "In two ways God is *different* decisively from all else and his relation to the world is in these respects characterized by *discontinuity*: God is ever and alone God, the only self-existent and self-directing reality, the only self-sufficient love; and God is ever over *against* every level of being which has not accepted *agape* to judge and fulfill it." (p. 69) These are fortunate admissions, which should per-

haps have been developed at more length, since without them Ferré would be open to the charge of a too simple monism.

The Chapter on Revelation, which is particularly good in its analysis of revelation as "a personal appearance" of God in history, contains one section which will probably be subjected to more searching analysis in a subsequent volume on the church. Ferré repudiates the notion of the revelation in Christ as *einmaligkeit*, or once-for-all, since he asserts that the fullness of the revelation comes not in Jesus but in the Church, which is the extension of the incarnation. One must ask, however, if there is not a sense in which the revelation of God in Christ is an unrepeatable event, dated at a particular moment in history "under Pontius Pilate." Does not one run the danger of taking Christ out of history by refusing to insist on this fact? Is there not at least a danger that "Christ" will become diffused as a sort of vague spiritual substance or reinterpreted mythologically after the manner of the dying and rising Greek Savior gods who had no "dates"? Granted the close relation of "Jesus and his Church," which Newton Flew and others have pointed out, granted the sense in which Kierkegaard is right in maintaining that "1,800 years make no more difference than a single day" is there not also a very important truth to be conserved by stressing the once-for-allness of the historic incarnation at a point in time?

The other question to raise in this connection is the adequacy of the time-honored phrase "the extension of the incarnation." Perhaps this description of the church is necessary, conserving one side of the truth, but it is at best a dangerous necessity since it is open to the subtle suggestion that the empirical church is unambiguously to be identified with the redeeming work of Christ. The church is still a group of sinful men who will always perpetuate a perversion as well as an extension of the incarnation. Does not this make the phrase "the body of Christ" a more adequate symbol for the church, since the term "body" can more conveniently include the reminder that it is a sinful and corrupted body than can the term "incarnation"?

Ferré's discussion of the Last Things (Chapter Nine) will be helpful to many Christians who are disturbed by the immoral implications of some eschatological symbols and yet do not wish to surrender to an easy, sentimental optimism about the future.

### III

The reviewer has saved until last a comment on Ferré's chapter on "The Work of God in Incarnation" since a major matter is involved here upon which Ferré will undoubtedly elaborate in a later volume of his series. He approaches Christology by making incarnation the primary category of explanation, in terms of which both atonement and resurrection can be understood. "If incarnation is true, so are atonement and resurrection." (p. 212; cf. also p. 216) Is this, however, necessarily the correct order from an existential perspective, as Ferré claims (p. 216)? Certainly Forsyth and others have made a powerful case for suggesting that it is from the experience of forgiveness and restoration to fellowship with God (atonement) that one comes to know who Christ is (incarnation).

From this perspective, the proper order of questioning would be first, "What has God done in Christ?" and after that "What must be affirmed of the person through whom this is done?" In other words, atonement is a category of personal relationship while incarnation is a much more philosophical category which must be discussed as a result of the existential experience of forgiveness and grace. Ferré in fact quotes Barth to the effect that "revelation is reconciliation," which is not so different from Forsyth's much earlier insistence that "revelation is redemption."

And to put the emphasis, as Ferré does, on incarnation as the basic category suggests on the contrary that revelation is simply a manifestation, rather than a reconciling and redeeming act. We can be impressed with incarnation; but we can be changed by atonement. This is not to slight the doctrine of incarnation but simply to suggest that the proper order of belief may begin with the atonement as primary, followed by a belief in the incarnation as a necessary implication of atonement. As Brunner has put it very concisely, "Jesus Christ did not come merely to come, but he came to redeem." (*The Divine-Human Encounter*, Westminster Press, p. 142.)

At countless other points this book is stimulating and provocative, and it can be safely predicted that it will not be a theological "flash in the pan," but will gradually and persistently work its way into the theological thinking of our generation.

Furthermore, when a man makes explicit that the real test of his book is whether or not his readers are "overwhelmed by the greatness and goodness of God" (p. ix), one may reply that this has been achieved even though the reader may not fully agree with all that the author has said.

ROBERT McAFEE BROWN

Chairman, Department of Religion, Macalester College, St. Paul, Minnesota.

**Christus Victor.** By GUSTAF AULÉN. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951. xvi-163 pp. \$2.50.

The brevity of this book is no indication of its importance. This book is the result of a thorough restudy of the history of Christian theology. Bishop Aulén has been a careful student of the history of Christian thought over the years. He has published an excellent study of the history of dogma which is currently used by theological students in the Swedish universities, and is now in its fourth edition. Unfortunately this book has not been translated into English. Bishop Aulén indicates that certain important revisions now need to be made in studying the whole history of Christian thought. He has himself helped to create the interest which contemporary Swedish theologians have in the history of Christian theology.

The conviction of Aulén is that there are certain motifs which characterize the Christian religion. These motifs assert themselves again and again in Christian history. They express themselves in various thought forms. This conviction has arisen out of Bishop Aulén's study of the history of doctrine. A motif is an idea, a theme, a dynamic urge that is always at work within the Christian life. It gives rise to doctrines, intellectual pictures, and convictions. These motifs are of fundamental importance. The dominant motif within the Christian faith is the reality of God. Bishop Aulén has written an excellent book, also untranslated, describing the history of the Christian conception of God.

In *Christus Victor* Aulén reviews the history of Christian thinking with respect to the atonement. He undertakes a limited task in this volume: that of describing the main theories of the atonement. He does not attempt to prove the truth of any one of these views. "My aim," he writes, "has been throughout an historical, not an apologetic aim. It has been my endeavour to make clear, to the best of my power, the nature of the various types of teaching on the subject of the Atonement as they have emerged in history" (p. 158). This limited aim reflects the sharp line modern Swedish theologians draw between Christian faith and Christian theology. The task of the theologian is to describe "the Christian faith as a living reality," to explain its significance, "to make clear what essentially belongs to it, and to bring



to light . . . its own characteristic viewpoints" (Aulén's Preface to *The Faith of the Christian Church*). Its task is to describe accurately and objectively what Christianity has been in its history. It is not the business of the Christian theologian to make value judgments. These may be made by the theologian as a man, but not by the man as a theologian.

A difficult question arises here. So far as the past is concerned, the Christian theologian can do nothing else but describe accurately the judgments which have been made by Christians. But what about the responsibility of the theologians in connection with decisions which have to be made by the churches now? Is the decision of faith made by Christian laymen without benefit of a theological education necessarily more accurate than the decision of faith made by an expert theologian? Do not theologians have a responsibility in helping Christian laymen now make more intelligent decisions of faith? Can the responsibility of guiding the decisions of faith made within the church be escaped by its theologians?

There have appeared in the history of Christian thinking about the atonement, Bishop Aulén maintains, three important conceptions.

They are, first, the classic theory of the atonement. This view is dominant in the New Testament, and in the first 1,000 years of Christian history. During the Middle Ages, it was gradually ousted from its dominant position, although it survived in the devotional language and art of the church. Then it was reasserted in vigorous form in the theology of Luther. There are, therefore, good reasons for calling this the classic theory of the atonement.

"Its central theme is the idea of the Atonement as a Divine conflict and victory; Christ—Christus Victor—fights against and triumphs over the evil powers of the world, the 'tyrants' under which mankind is in bondage and suffering, and in Him God reconciles the world to Himself" (p. 4). The background of this view is the rebellion of created wills against God. This conflict gives the process of salvation its dramatic character. This view presents reconciliation as a continuous Divine work. The classic view conceives of ". . . the Atonement as a *movement of God to man*, and God as closely and personally engaged in the work of man's deliverance" (p. 154). Because sin is a very real objective power, salvation involves a positive deliverance. The victory over evil is won through Christ, in whom the power, holiness and love of God are incarnated. "The Divine Love prevails over the Wrath, the Blessing overcomes the Curse, by the way of Divine self-oblation and sacrifice. The redeeming work of Christ shows how much the atonement 'costs' God" (p. 153f).

The second is the Latin theory of the atonement. This view was worked out by Anselm in his book, *Cur Deus homo*. He used the ideas of satisfaction and merit worked out by Tertullian and Cyprian. The fundamental idea here is that since man has sinned against God, man must make an offering or payment to satisfy God's justice. It is impossible for sinful man to offer God any adequate payment. Hence Christ became a man in order to make the payment. This whole conception is legalistic and rationalistic. The continuity of God's work in the atonement is broken, for the required satisfaction is offered by Christ as a man. This view of the atonement has been restated with vigor by Emil Brunner in his important book, *The Mediator*.

The third view is the subjective theory worked out by Abelard, a younger contemporary of Anselm's. Abelard rejected the idea of satisfaction. He emphasized the role of Jesus as Teacher and Example, who awakens within men the response

of love. The love aroused within men is regarded as meritorious. Abelard makes much of the text, "Much is forgiven to them that love much" (Luke 7:47). The stress is here placed on what man does, on "*man's movement to God*" (p. 154). The conception of sin has been weakened in this view. Salvation results from a change in man's attitude. There is no special significance attached to the death of Christ. The Incarnation has, therefore, ceased to have any great importance. The sharpness of God's opposition to sin has been removed. The conception of divine wrath has been dropped. This theory of the atonement was discredited by the Enlightenment, neglected by the Pietists, and heartily welcomed by the liberal theologians of the nineteenth century. The view can be expressed in a simple, rational doctrine.

In Chapter VIII, Bishop Aulén gives a very illuminating analysis and comparison of these three main theories of the atonement.

Theological students and Christian ministers will do well to study the book carefully. They will gain an understanding of the important lines of Christian thought on this subject which can be obtained in no other book. Bishop Aulén has probably oversimplified the history of Christian thought here, but he paints a picture his readers will never forget.

It is well that this fine book is reprinted in the United States. It deserved, however, to have a new introduction. There are several American theologians who could have written an excellent introduction. This new edition should have indicated that Gustaf Aulén is now the Bishop of Strängnäs, a position he has held since 1933.

E. JEROME JOHANSON

Professor of Christian Theology, Hartford Theological Seminary, Hartford, Connecticut.

**A Protestant Manifesto.** By WINFRED E. GARRISON. New York: The Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952. 207 pp. \$2.75.

The growing ecumenical consciousness within Protestant Christianity is expressing itself in a steady stream of excellent books. Among recent scholarly presentations, Dr. F. W. Dillistone, *The Structure of the Divine Society*, exemplifies source material which all concerned with the doctrine of the church must consult. In addition to some of these more serious studies, there have been some writings perhaps describable as "polemical history," factually reliable yet designed to encourage in the reader a sense of loyalty to and acquaintance with the tenets "we" hold dear. Dr. James Hastings Nichols' *Primer for Protestants* belonged in that category, as a kind of handbook for the inquirer or a stimulus for the already convinced.

This new volume belongs in the latter category. Its avowed purpose is "to state in clear and simple terms the basic convictions of those Christians and Christian communions that call themselves Protestant." An auxiliary aim is expressed as the desire "to make more evident the degree of unity that now exists among Protestants." If anyone should challenge the title of the book as being too bombastic, let him be warned that the author himself takes cognizance of the possible unseemliness of the title, since it is not a statement of opinion of any party or school of thought. "On the other hand," he says, "while no one can speak officially for the whole of Protestantism, anyone who thinks he knows the facts may speak unofficially." Certainly no one has a better right to speak thus than Dr. Garrison. He taught church history at the University of Chicago for many years; he has probably handled as many new books

coming off the presses as any other man, in his capacity for twenty-eight years as literary editor of *The Christian Century*; he is a member of the Faith and Order and American Theological Commissions of the World Council of Churches. His combination of scholarly erudition, journalistic alertness, and practical involvement in the work of the church makes for exactly the qualifications needed for writing this type of book.

It is elementary in its facts and the method of stating its facts. It is straightforward, lucid, unadorned with literary flourishes, and brief, always to the point. For that reason it is at last the book to give to the intelligent layman. Its market should include, certainly, all who hold official positions on lay boards and committees of every denomination, church-school teachers, those in the pews who confess to needing more background information about what Protestantism stands for, and students in college courses. The public library should stock it, and every minister will have it available to hand to the person whose conversation reveals an "opening" for further illumination. These statements sound like the blurbs of the advertiser, but they are nonetheless valid. It is that kind of book.

Dr. Garrison fits the material of the first portion of his book into three categories: broad principles held by many religions, basic Christian beliefs, and Protestantism's distinctive affirmations. These last are listed as four in number: justification by faith, the freedom and vocation of the Christian man, the priesthood of all believers, and the sufficiency of the Bible. Then follow chapters on "Cherished Values and Ways," "Alien to the Protestant Spirit," and "Protestantism Denies." Lest the last two chapter headings sound negative, let it be said that Dr. Garrison insists that even Protestantism's sounding a "resounding and everlasting NO" (that phrase is one illustration of why we call this book "polemical") is in reality an affirmation.

There is great concern evidenced in the last chapter, "Protestantism's Word to the Modern World," for such matters as continued vigilance in America for separation of church and state, and opposition to all attempts "to return to the medieval system of compulsory uniformity."

It is to be hoped that some Roman Catholics might read this book. One feels that they would be impressed with the Protestant writer's willingness to be candid, calling a spade a spade, an error an error. Here is no effort to represent our saints as saintlier than they really were in the flesh. He looks the fact of what was done to Servetus right in the face. The disunity of Protestantism is frankly admitted, although a right perspective concerning this is also insisted upon. "Protestantism is a collective noun covering many widely different communions." He clearly points out that what seems to be disunity is such only if one assumes that conformity and uniformity are essential to unity. Since, however, it is probably too much to expect that many Roman Catholics will read this book, it is not too sanguine a hope that Protestant readers will learn here a little more clearly that "the Protestant principle" (as Professor Tillich labels it) is something worthy of our deepest and truest loyalty, rooted as it is in something infinitely vaster than a few little cherished practices of one's own particular sect.

Dr. Garrison suggests using the phrase "non-Roman Christian" to affirm Protestantism's "positive position." Since very few Roman Catholics ever use "Roman," and most Protestants follow suit by using only the term "Catholic" without the adjective, might not one go on to a further suggestion, that Protestants refer to themselves as "Protestant Catholics"? After all, many centuries of Christian history belong to Protestantism as well as to Roman Catholicism. Too many Protestants

seem erroneously to assume that Protestantism began with the sixteenth century, or at least that it began with Jesus and the disciples and St. Paul, with a long hiatus between the first and the sixteenth! We cannot afford to lose all those centuries!

**KENDIG BRUBAKER CULLY**

Minister of Education, First Methodist Church, Evanston, Illinois.

**Cult and Culture. A Study of Religion and American Culture.** By V. OGDEN VOGT. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951. ix-269 pp. \$3.25.

"No one can measure the power of an idea that is true or of a religious cult (system of religious rites) that is right and beautiful." Into this incommensurable realm the author daringly adventures, returning with substance for the deepest thought. Mr. Vogt contends that religion, and particularly the cult, is the "chief source both of cultural order and of cultural variation." Furthermore, following the late eminent anthropologist B. Malinowski, "A society which has lost its religion becomes sooner or later a society which has lost its culture." This, says Mr. Vogt, is the key to our social crisis, which is not primarily economic or political, but religious. Our religion is no longer performing the function which is needful if civilization is to endure. No longer does man find in his experience of worship the fusing of all his values and those of his fellows into a rich and moving unity which is then stamped upon both the personal and social order. Our disease is incoherence and disunity of spirit which can be cured only by a healthy and reformed cult. "Religion is not providing culture with a core of faith and a matrix of worship that is acceptable to the modern mind. Its theology is unreformed, its cult is dry and thin. It has failed to gather and compose the vital spiritual forces of this present time."

The treatment is divided into three parts: conceptual, critical, constructive. In the first part he engages in the difficult work of demonstrating the dependence of culture and civilization upon the presence of a vital cult. The argument runs as follows: A society is not simply a congeries of elements accidentally collected in one region of space, but a group of people with their habits, skills, institutions and arts expressive of an underlying system of ideas. This underlying system (implicit dominant ontology) is not often expressed overtly, but, depending upon the degree of cultural unity, enters into all enterprises as an implicit assumption or presupposition. It is the function of the cult to express this unity of ideas through the arts of worship in such a way as to clarify and enhance it. The work of the cult is not that of pure thought (e.g., theology) nor esthetic appreciation, but a fusion of all the arts into a celebration of the fundamental values and ideas so that they are more deeply felt, more widely embodied in the lives of men, and hence more productive of that meaningful unity of society which is the cult's chief product.

Following this main line, he surveys a wide range of interconnections between the cult and civilization, private cultivation, philosophy, commerce, art, and government. Such an immense effort is a partial summary of a major segment of the social sciences which has been examining the relationships between various factors in society. Mr. Vogt's conclusions, though opposed to all "materialist interpretations of society," are in the main supported by a wide range of anthropological literature. The new-old science of the sociology of religion has been working at these problems with some success and our author is familiar with the chief works in the field. If a criticism were leveled against this section of the book, it would be that he does not share with the reader any of the difficult methodological problems involved in establishing the dependence of the social order upon any one social factor. Mono-causal theories

of social causation, though attractive because of simplicity, are notoriously difficult to support scientifically. Consequently, having been assured that the cult is the major causal force in society, the reader feels a certain vagueness enter the argument when later the reformation of the present-day cult is said to involve philosophical, artistic, and social activities. I suspect the author has some important ideas on this technical side of his inquiry, but he does not share them with us in this work. No doubt a man cannot say everything at once, but many students of the social sciences would be more impressed with his argument if he had given us a chapter on the subject.

Part Two is a critical examination of the major rifts in our society, economic, religious, intellectual, and educational. He rightly observes that these lesions will be fatal if not healed and urges that the therapeutic unifying power of the cult be applied to the body social.

The last third of the book is an effort at a constructive rebuilding of the cult in American life. Here is a man who deserves a wide audience, for he has not only written richly on these matters, but he has been working impressively at the practice of them for over three decades. There are many important suggestions in these pages. Even where one might differ with him in his liberal theological departures, there is no escaping the problems he is seeking to solve. These problems lie in the areas of theology, ethics, and art. He points out, for example, that the American cult has been often weakened by theological requirements which have excluded the best trained minds of the community. If it is to serve its function of unification, the cult must find a place for the best in advancing thought as well as preserving the thought of the past—it cannot be a barrier to truth.

Similarly in the field of ethics and social values. If any large segment of society is denied an expression in worship of its major values, the cult cannot do its creative work. Rather, it becomes divisive or irrelevant. Many of our churches fall under this criticism because they have become the voice of a single social class rather than the unifier of classes.

The American cult is also defective in its understanding of the function of the arts. The cult cannot function unless the major ideas and values assume significant esthetic form. This involves a fusion of all the arts into a harmonious expression which at the deepest levels speaks to "all sorts and conditions of men."

JOHN B. MAGEE

Professor of Philosophy and Religion, College of Puget Sound, Tacoma, Wash.

**He Came Down From Heaven and The Forgiveness of Sins.** By CHARLES WILLIAMS. London: Faber & Faber, 1950. 200 pp. 16s.

**The Figure of Beatrice: A study in Dante.** By CHARLES WILLIAMS. London: Faber & Faber, 1950. (Fifth Impression.) 236 pp. 15s.

The novels of Charles Williams, *Descent Into Hell* and others, have been published in this country and attracted some attention. They have been dubbed "supernatural thrillers," but in no derogatory sense; as one of the book jackets says, Williams "had a real experience of the supernatural world to communicate." This gifted and unusual British thinker and poet, who died in 1945, exercised influence over several now more widely known, such as T. S. Eliot, C. S. Lewis, and Dorothy Sayers. His chief theological work, *The Descent of the Dove*, was published here by Pellegrini and Cudahy in 1950, and the two books now under review may be published later on.



To readers who are accustomed to the "liberal" historical approach to the Bible and unaccustomed to a high Anglican theological background, Williams' theologizing and his treatment of the Bible may sometimes seem alien. The present reviewer confesses to being left cold by confident assertions, carefully elaborated, that God desired and planned the Incarnation "before" and even regardless of the Fall, and by attempts to define too closely the relation between God's will and the evil in the world. But these flaws, if they be such, are of little or no importance compared to Williams' insights and the provocative individual quality of his imagination.

The first book named above includes two works at first published separately. It would be impossible to summarize the argument of either in the space available. To pick at random, in *He Came Down From Heaven*, we have a chapter on the Fall called "The Myth of the Alteration in Knowledge." Adam and Eve, he says, wished "to know an antagonism in the good, to find out what the good would be like if a contradiction were introduced into it . . . to know schism in the universe"—a divine knowledge. They got what they wanted; which is not to say they liked it when they got it. For while God could know evil by pure intelligence, without calling it into being, man could know it only by experiencing it as sin and death. The sexual relationship, for example, which they already knew and delighted in as good, they now saw as evil and became ashamed. Thus man acquired the contradiction in his nature; he "knows good, and he knows good as evil; his love will always be twisted with anti-love."

God has sought to restore man through a series of covenants. In connection with the Tower of Babel, Williams rejects the excessive gloom of some neo-orthodox interpreters of history. He points out that man's recurrent attempts to reach heaven in ways that prove to be wrong, are necessary prerequisites to the right ways being shown. "Unless something is done, nothing happens. Unless devotion is given to a thing which must prove false in the end, the thing that is true in the end cannot enter . . . the sacrifice must be made ready, and the fire will strike on another altar." Again, he rebukes the sort of piety which says, "Our little minds were never meant to . . ." "Fortunately there is the book of Job to make it clear that our little minds were meant. A great curiosity ought to exist concerning divine things. Man was intended to argue with God"—when he does, God answers.

One chapter deals with "The Practice of Substituted Love." "He saved others; himself he cannot save," originally a taunt flung at Christ, was a precise definition of the life of the Kingdom which he inaugurated on earth. "We are to love each other as he loved us, laying down our lives as he did, that this love may be perfected." "In exterior things this is commonly recognized as valid . . . interiorly, it is less frequently supposed to be possible." That is, one person can take over, for a stated time in a specific situation, the grief, fear, or anxiety of another—the first actually experiencing it in his imagination, and the other actually losing it, thus becoming able to make some decision or become adjusted to a situation otherwise too difficult. Such a practice, he says, should not be confined to the saints, but should be common in the church.

"The technique needs practice and intelligence," as does the related practice of intercessory prayer. Williams points out some of the pitfalls, emphasizing that most of us are "the old selves on the new way." The present reviewer, knowing of cases where it has been tried, would agree that there are certainly pitfalls; people with insufficient knowledge of their own mixed motives are here "playing with a real power" and are indeed in danger.

What our author calls "coinherence," the subtle mutual interplay of personalities, our mirror-reflections of one another, the dark and general communion in sin, over against the redeeming communion of incipient sainthood—this whole inner cosmos is much more real, intricate and dynamic than our ordinary awareness recognizes; and even non-Christian psychologists will bear this out. The present state of the world seems to call for the courage to experiment (taking due account of the risks) toward more creative living in this realm—especially in directions which are rather clearly suggested in the New Testament.

The second book, *The Figure of Beatrice*, is (said a Scottish reviewer) "one of the most ambitious essays in the interpretation of Dante our time has seen." It is also something else—an essay in what Williams calls "the theology of romantic love." He sees Dante's writings, particularly *The Divine Comedy*, as the greatest exemplification in European literature of the *via affirmativa*, the way to God through the full acceptance of the images and experiences offered to us in the created world; and more specifically, through the exploration of the manifold conscious and unconscious meanings of "falling in love."

Dante himself worked through a long process of relating this experience, usually dismissed as merely "emotional," to all other aspects of life as he saw it—to poetry, politics, philosophy, religion. In one sense Beatrice was "everything" to him—the revelation of humanity made perfect, the essence of Divine love; he could not simply outgrow her, but had to return to her repeatedly on deeper and higher levels of imagination. At the same time she was only one image among others, as any lover has to learn to acknowledge. "It is because Dante knew that there was a great deal other than Beatrice to which he must attend, that his attention to Beatrice is valuable."

"People still fall in love, and fall in love as Dante did"; but neither theologians nor pastoral counselors, for the most part, have given this phenomenon their serious attention. We have an abundance of books on how childhood experiences with the parents condition the individual's religious experience and how negative experiences of this kind can be offset by corrective therapy; also books on how to build happy marriages, presumably starting from mutual romantic love, and fairly easy to relate to religious experience. What we do not yet have is any comparable amount of serious study of how adolescent and adult love experiences that cannot be worked out through marriage can be made healthy and creative factors in the individual's life rather than something he or she must grimly try to "rise above." This field of investigation seems to have been left, so far, to the Jungian school of depth-psychology. For that reason Williams' Dantean-Christian approach to it is especially welcome. Although it is not designed to appeal to all temperaments, some counselors and some counselees will surely find that this book speaks to their condition.

ERMINIE HUNTRESS LANTERO

RELIGION IN LIFE, New York City.

**History and Human Relations.** By HERBERT BUTTERFIELD. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952. 252 pp. \$3.50.

This book is a collection of lectures given on different occasions; some of them cover ground already familiar to readers of his wise and penetrating book, *Christianity and History*, others are of special interest to students in the field; but Professor Butterfield's insights are still relevant and readable. In "The Tragic Element in Modern Conflict," he discusses the perennial predicament of opposing powers, each feeling itself to be righteous and well disposed, each beset by devils of fear and suspicion,

"locked in its own system of self-righteousness." In "Christianity and Human Relationships," he calls for a realistic view of sin on both sides, together with imaginative charity; for "love your neighbor" as against "work for society," "serve the State," or sacrifice for a cause; and for love to God, which "puts the rest of our loves in proper proportion."

In a lecture on Marxist History, he points out that it is men who make history; but men act out of their conditioning and are in turn products of history, especially economic history. Non-Marxist historians often have imputed too much responsibility either to individual statesmen or to the rise and decline of "ideas." Christians especially should admit that "everything in history is curiously fastened to the earth." Moreover, the "dialectic" processes in which something new emerges from the clash of opposing forces is a flexible, illuminating concept which historical facts bear out. Nevertheless, Marxist historians apply their formulas mechanically, oversimplifying the data to fit their materialism and their political cause; they are "not sufficiently aware of the universe that lies inside a personality."

E. H. L.

**Four Prophets of Our Destiny.** By WILLIAM HUBBEN. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952. viii-170 pp. \$2.75.

The four prophets in question are Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, and Kafka. The author was originally a German Catholic; he became a Friend in the twenties, and a liberal school principal; in the thirties he fled from the Hitler regime, and is now a prominent educator and editor among the Friends of Philadelphia.

The book is a readable introduction of these four portentous thinkers to the intelligent layman. Dr. Hubben's approach is that of a sound and healthy Christian mind; he is humanly sympathetic, and not unduly fascinated by the pathological; on the other hand, he has no superficial optimism about human nature and history, but is open to the deep insights and "tragic sense of life" which was so strong in these four. Each of them, he says, "challenges with his appalling message the whole realm of human existence"; he views them "as spiritual relatives against the background of a formerly self-assured society which is now in the agonies of a new orientation."

He finds that Kierkegaard is one "whose incisive truths and courageous personal fight have inspired the modern mind to move" *beyond* neo-orthodoxy; that "much of Dostoevsky's prophecy—too much for our comfort—has proved to be true," though his Russian nationalism was sadly confused; that "only for those who are unwilling to risk the never-ending experiment of faith and who have even lost the pagan stoicism of Nietzsche, can Kafka's despair be the answer."

E. H. L.

